



## **Message from Mr Jacques CHIRAC, President of the French Republic, to the XVIth International AIDS Conference.**

Toronto (Canada) - 15 August 2006.

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Twenty-five years after AIDS first appeared, the disease continues to spread.

Of the five million new cases recorded last year, the majority were in the developing world, particularly Africa, where this scourge continues to exact the heaviest toll. The epidemic more than ever appears to be one of the disastrous facets of globalization. Globalization is a source of opportunity and prosperity and yet it has failed to bring hundreds of millions of women and men out of poverty, hunger, ignorance and disease.

In the fight against AIDS, the international community has made two commitments: to ensure access to treatment to all those who need it by 2010; and to halt and begin to reverse the spread of the epidemic by 2015. It is morally unacceptable that the majority of AIDS sufferers are in the South while access to prevention and treatment remains very broadly confined to the North. The international community must live up to its commitments.

To achieve this, four challenges must be met.

The first challenge is resources. The substantial funding made available since your previous meetings in Barcelona and Bangkok still falls short of the requirements estimated by UNAIDS.

Boosting resources requires, first, an increase in official development assistance and the share of it that is earmarked for health care. France, for its part, will in 2007 raise to 300 million euros its contribution to the Global Fund, which has become the leading multilateral instrument to finance prevention and treatment of AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in the developing world.

Boosting resources also requires the establishment of new financing mechanisms pegged to growth in world wealth, so as to guarantee additional and sustainable funding. This is the goal of the solidarity levy on airline tickets that took effect in France on July 1; most of the proceeds from this contribution will be allocated to the UNITAID project, an international drug purchase facility to which Brazil, Chile, Norway and the United Kingdom have already agreed to contribute. By creating long-term solvent demand and thus giving drug producers



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the visibility they need, this mechanism provides an incentive to new producers to enter the market and will make it possible to consolidate price reductions.

Generic drugs have played a decisive role in bringing down prices. The international community has made a commitment to facilitate access to these drugs. Let us refrain, therefore, from asking poor countries to forgo in bilateral agreements what the WTO agreements have been able to offer them.

The second challenge is universal access to prevention and treatment. The programmes set up in a large number of African, Asian and Latin American countries clearly demonstrate that broad-based access to treatment is possible in the developing world, that the efficacy of treatment is the same there as in the industrialized countries and that treating AIDS sufferers boosts economic development in poor countries.

To genuinely scale up prevention and treatment, we must help the countries of the South to reinforce their health care systems and to cope with the acute human resources crisis they face.

In most of the countries of the South, the cost of treatment must be borne by patients and every year this plunges millions of families into poverty. Based on a French proposal, the Saint Petersburg Summit decided to initiate an international discussion on health insurance schemes in the poorest countries.

The third challenge is respect for human rights and the struggle against denial and discrimination. No one must be denied access to prevention and care based on his or her way of life or membership in any population group. France rejects any attempt to introduce such discrimination, which would violate the fundamental principles of human rights. I salute the courage of the women and men who, throughout the world, are fighting for the dignity and the rights of those suffering from the disease.

The fourth challenge, which lies at the heart of your discussions, is research. The effort must be continued and deepened in all areas relevant to the epidemic. I refer first and foremost to the search for a vaccine, which requires new methods of international cooperation. France, together with its European partners, intends to play its full role in this endeavour.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the fight against AIDS is a fight for life, for justice, for human dignity and for development. Your collective achievements have given rise to hope. Let us work together to make it a reality.

Thank you.

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