

**Remarks of Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director, UNICEF at the
Global Partners Forum on Children Affected by HIV/AIDS
Thursday, 9 February 2006 • London, England**

Good morning. Thank you all for being here.

**On behalf of UNICEF, welcome to the third annual
“Global Partners’ Forum on Children Affected by HIV and
AIDS: Universal Access to Prevention Treatment and Care.”**

**Many thanks to DFID for co-convening this meeting ...
and to Gareth Thomas for his longstanding and strong support
of efforts related to HIV/AIDS and children.**

**Of course we are very pleased that Dr. Peter Piot is here
... and I appreciate his tireless leadership and friendship.**

**Dr. Piot and I will be traveling together to Rwanda and
Tanzania to focus on children and HIV/AIDS this weekend.**

**A special welcome to Bonisa Yantol from “Mad About
Art,” who will be speaking in a few moments.**

**Thanks also to the many participants from all over the
world ... including senior government officials ... the Joint UN
Program on AIDS ... and partners from the NGO and faith-
based communities, international development, and academia,
and the media.**

**This consultation aims to reach agreement on several
important potential outcomes ... many of which Under-
Secretary Thomas will detail in his presentation.**

**But it is especially critical that we also stay focused on
broad themes and approaches ... such as integration of
service delivery, rapid scale-up of proven interventions, long-
term strengthening of national systems, and partnerships ... if
we are going to be able to turn the tide on the scourge of
HIV/AIDS.**

**Today, the world is more than 20 years into this
pandemic.**

This global threat is undermining children, undermining families, communities, economies ... and national systems such as health, education and social services.

The international picture of children affected by HIV/AIDS is daunting.

The disease continues to roll back progress on child survival in highly impacted countries, such as an increasing number of those in sub-Saharan Africa ... and undermines development efforts in low-prevalence countries.

As you know, in 2005 an estimated 38 million adults and 2.3 million children under age 15 were living with HIV worldwide.

Some 3 million people died of AIDS in 2005 ... including 570,000 children.

Every year, more than 700,000 children acquire the disease ... primarily through mother-to-child transmission.

Millions more children are caring for sick and dying parents ... and the number of children-headed households has been increasing.

Despite the severity of the crisis, children are still not a central focus of the global response.

The cost of continued silence and inaction would be not just millions of additional deaths ... but also children who are further marginalized, stigmatized, malnourished, uneducated and psychologically harmed.

An entire generation has never known a world without AIDS ... and yet, children have been missing from the HIV/AIDS picture far too long.

Last October, Secretary-General Annan, Dr. Piot and I were joined by the First Lady of Rwanda and many, many partners around the world to launch "UNITE FOR CHILDREN UNITE AGAINST AIDS."

The goals of the campaign are to show children as the missing face of AIDS ... but also to address the impacts of HIV/AIDS across a range of Millennium Development Goals ... with a focus on achieving results.

**The effects of this pandemic on children are staggering.
Every day:**

- **There are about 1,900 new infections among children under 15**
- **About 1,400 children under 15 die of AIDS-related illnesses**
- **And more than 6,000 young people age 15 to 24 become newly infected.**

We have also found that two decades into this pandemic, far too few people are getting the help they need to deal with the impacts of HIV/AIDS:

Less than 10 percent of pregnant women are being offered services to prevent transmission of HIV to their infants ...

Less than 10 percent of children who have been orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS receive public support or services ...

Less than 5 percent of children in need of treatment for HIV/AIDS receive it ...

And less than a third of young women aged 15 to 24 in sub-Saharan Africa fully understand how to avoid the disease.

So this campaign is focusing on four key, measurable result areas:

- **Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission ...**
- **Pediatric treatment of HIV/AIDS ...**
- **Prevention of infection among adolescents and young people ...**
- **And protection and support for children affected by HIV/AIDS.**

Many of you in this room have provided UNICEF and our partners around the world critical support in this campaign ... and for that, you have my personal thanks and respect.

As “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” continues to move forward, there are a number of ingredients I mentioned earlier that are necessary for ultimate success.

The first is the need for better and sustained integration among our various interventions ... at all levels and across all sectors.

Progress toward all the Millennium Development Goals will require that we no longer consider our responses in isolation.

The response to HIV/AIDS ... and efforts to improve child and maternal survival ... have been seen for too long, by too many, as separate and independent spheres.

Pediatric AIDS treatment must be viewed as a critical component of broader child-survival strategies.

Similarly, efforts to Prevent Mother-to-Child Transmission must be part of the “continuum of care” approach to maternal and child health that will produce needed results.

We know that issues like disease, poverty and gender inequality are cycles that feed upon each other.

If we are to break them, national plans must combine high-impact health and nutrition interventions with a wide array of other sectors.

This will require a special focus on long-term strengthening of national systems.

In the area of health, many countries with the highest child and maternal mortality have low coverage levels for critical services because of system-wide supply and demand obstacles.

We must address the underlying impediments in health systems, including policies, resource allocation and capacity development.

It is through integration and long-term system strengthening that progress against HIV/AIDS ... and toward the Millennium Development Goals ... will be the most successful.

In the meantime, rapid scale-up of proven interventions must also be a priority.

So far, the world has responded to the monumental task of responding to HIV/AIDS within a comfort zone of pilot projects and incrementalism.

We must build upon recent efforts with governments and other partners to develop nationally scaled plans and programs ... moving away from pet projects that, while valuable, will never truly achieve our goals.

As you will hear from both Gareth Thomas and Peter Piot, the need to support and strengthen country-driven responses and plans are key recommendations of the Global Task Team ...

... and a fundamental principle of G8 and World Summit commitments to move toward universal access.

One objective of “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS” can be found in its name ... to unite governments, UN agencies, NGOs, faith based organizations, the private sector and academic institutions ... to help scale up our responses.

This brings us to the crucial need for strong, effective partnerships.

The scale of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and its impacts on children, demand that we all work together.

Partnerships are closely related to the concept of integration ... because they require working outside of the usual “stovepipes” ... and drawing upon the strengths and resources of individual partners.

Over the past few years, the Global Partners Forum has been a driving force behind a globally coherent response to children affected by HIV and AIDS.

Agreements and frameworks have been important outcomes of the Partners’ work ... but underlying all of our efforts must be a sustained commitment to achieving measurable results for children.

Our success will not be judged by the words and papers spoken and distributed here ... but through the demonstrable impact we will have on the lives of children and their families.

Your presence here and your dedication will help make the results that we need ... a reality.

But even more importantly, you can help give countless millions of children a very precious gift: their future.

Thank you.

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