

**« A call to action: Protecting mothers and children against AIDS »**  
(United Nations, New York, Wednesday 23 September, 16 h 00)

It is an honor for me to be invited to address you, here at the United Nations. Some time ago I decided to lend my support to the thousands who are on the frontlines of the fight against HIV and AIDS. My contribution is humble. I am not a doctor, nor a researcher or a politician. I am simply trying to lend my voice to those who too often are not heard.

On their behalf, I would first of all like to thank all representatives of governments. The efforts of all countries, from the North as well as from the South, have given hope to millions of people. Today, more than 4 million people are on AIDS treatment in developing countries - up from almost no-one five years ago. Your support to the Global Fund, UNAIDS, UNICEF and many voluntary and non-governmental organizations has produced impressive results. I have seen some of these results in Burkina Faso a few months ago. I met mothers and their HIV-positive children; I met pregnant women waiting for the results of their HIV tests; I met nurses and doctors. What I learned from them all was a message of hope. Because drugs are available; because HIV-positive mothers now may give birth to healthy babies.

But this is not the case everywhere. The threat of death from AIDS varies depending on where we happen to be born. In large parts of the world, the face of AIDS is a woman's face, and often the face of a mother, a mother afraid for herself and for her child. A mother afraid of being rejected by her relatives and by her community; a mother afraid of not receiving care, and of infecting her child.

I am here to speak up for these women and children. Around the world, only a third of women living with HIV receive the necessary treatment to prevent transmission of HIV to their babies. Only one fifth of women in developing countries are tested for HIV before giving birth. Isn't this an immense injustice, when treatment exists, when no baby needs to be born infected? Isn't this a major failure of our efforts to promote development, when women under treatment can better care for themselves and their families, and form the solid foundation of an entire community, an entire economy?

You are among the leaders of this world and I am not in a position to teach you anything. But I would ask you to support this call to action today: Let us, in the next 18 months, join forces with the Global Fund, Unicef and UNAIDS to double the number of HIV-positive pregnant women on effective antiretroviral treatment. By 2015, let us eliminate the transmission of HIV from mother to child. This is not a dream, we can do this - but only *you* have the power to make this a reality.

Thank you all for listening. My gratitude goes in particular to all the First Ladies in the room whom I know are also engaged in this fight.

At my side is someone who can speak to this subject better than I can. I now hand over the floor to Christina Rodriguez, from Brooklyn, New York.

Thank you.