



**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
KOFI ANNAN**

**ADDRESS TO THE AFRICAN  
DEVELOPMENT FORUM**

**Addis Ababa, 7 December 2000**

Thank you, Mr. Amoako Mr. Salim.  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

Let me begin by quoting to you the words of Alexandra, a 13-year-old African girl

“My country is dying. It is up to us Youth to make sure it somehow stave alive, because the adults as not doing that for as We children should not have to do that, but sin" we do, we'd better prepare ourselves,

We need to help each other stay alive, stay safe and protect our brothers, sisters. Cousins, and friends from AIDS”.

And I understand the young people at this conference have been active and equally eloquent

Which country Alexandra comes from hardly matters, because there are millions more young people like her all across this continent. What matters le that she is right. they: should not have to do that

She and her peers are the reason we are here because we are determined to save 5accerding generations from the scourge of AIDS, which in a fraction of our lifetime has brought unimaginable sorrow to Africa and the world

The world is at last beginning to respond to this crisis in a way that measures up in it. More people than ever before are aware of the impact of AIDS. Teachers, doctors, community and corporate leaders are more and more engaged in protecting people against infection, and in caring for those who are already infected.

Public education campaigns in one country were so relentless that they came to be known as the big noise. In a world where silence is death, I say let the big noise be heard far and wide.

I have come to this African Development Forum to deliver a message of hope. We face a terrible epidemic, but we are far from powerless against it - we can halt the spread of AIDS. We can even reverse it.

The impact of AIDS cuts across all aspects of a nation's social and economic life. As Nelson Mandela once said, 'AIDS kills those on whom society relies to grow the crops, work in the mines and the factories, in the schools and govern nations and countries.'

AIDS leaves poor *societies poorer still* and thus even more vulnerable to infection. It is unraveling fragile and hard-won success stories throughout the world. It has become a leading obstacle to overcoming poverty. And it is increasingly recognized as a security issue for the threats its consequences could pose to political stability, especially in already troubled societies.

In the face of such multiple burdens, our response must be comprehensive - a war fought on many fronts. We need a complete social mobilization against AIDS.

We need to mobilize resources, too. Even more important, we need to use those resources more efficiently. The world has begun to hear and heed the call for billions rather than millions, to be spent on AIDS in Africa.

Africa must now build up reliable procedures for spending these billions where they are most needed, and do the most good. Mechanisms to decentralize the use of resources; are especially important; it is local people who bear the greatest burden. But it is they - and especially the women among them who have already been leading the way in a counter-attack of care, counseling and compassion.

Above all, the challenge of AIDS is a test of leadership. Leadership has formed the bases of whatever progress we have achieved so far. I am thinking of individual who spoke out in the earliest days of the disease, at times quite provocatively, in order to get the issue onto the agenda. Or the many citizens groups that have overcome obstacles of shame, stigma and taboo to provide essential services and support. Or men and women in the private sector who have recognized that the struggle against AIDS makes good business *sense, and* have taken steps to protect their employees. Or scientists dedicated to the pursuit of safe and effective vaccine.

The question of leadership compels me to say a special word about the role of men. Women's empowerment is a key strategy for decreasing [illusion] its to HIV. But men can also make real difference. Often, however, we talk about men and AIDS, we think of men who refuse to use condoms, men's relations outside marriage, or harmful concepts of masculinity. This view is too limited.

We should also focus on the role of men in political life. For all the welcome gains we have seen in women's empowerment, men still tend to predominate at the highest political levels - and thus over both policy making and the purse-strings. Men in such positions must use their power. Their authority is crucial to ensuring that national efforts pull in one direction. They must spend political capital to allocate more resources for treatment and prevention. And they must see that this battle is their top priority.

I would like to salute the heads of state or Government who are with us today. They are showing admirable commitment. They understand that official recognition of the problem is the first step towards dealing with it. By leading their voice to this cause, they are helping all people in their nations and beyond to deal with AIDS openly, and thus take action. They are also showing that the leadership we need in Africa cannot come from outside, but rather must flow from within.

Leadership also means knowing one's limitations, and recognizing the need to work with others for the sterner good of all. Such an alliance has emerged to take the fight in which we are engaged: the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa.

One year ago yesterday I called together the Five partners - African governments, donors, NGOs, the private sector and the United Nations - and asked them to develop an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis. I am pleased to report that the partnership has made an excellent start.

Its work has strengthened national planning. It has created momentum for advocacy. It has helped mobilize new resources. And it has helped accelerate access to the full range of HIV care, support and treatment.

Today I am pleased to declare that the International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa is officially launched. From now on, across all of Africa, it will be the focus for a new spirit of co-operation in building the response to AIDS.

Today, in this hall, we see an excellent example of this new spirit. Indeed, the world can learn, and needs to learn, from Africa's experience. For AIDS, a global problem. There are many areas where it is spreading at an alarming rate, and where the "wall of silence" is still standing in the way of our struggle.

In India, HIV, is firmly established in the general population, and is finding its way into rural areas thought to have been spared. Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation, where six years ago the disease was almost unknown, have seen an extraordinary rise in HIV infections - almost twice as many, as just one year ago.

Unless we act in these regions, they could end up facing a crisis comparable to what we already see in many parts of Africa

AIDS is not over. The question is not whether more people will die. More people will die. The question is how many generations will suffer as ours is doing now, and how many generations will be saddled with a spreading arms, catastrophic economic and social losses, and heart-breaking, pervasive loss of life

Strong forces of hope are at work to reverse the prospect of a grimmer and grimmer future. Several countries have made aggressive efforts to get out the message about AIDS, and we are seeing signs that these efforts can help in stabilizing the level of infection

Later today I will visit the Organization for Social Services for AIDS, an Ethiopian NGO which is doing remarkable work for community-based prevention, mobilization and care.

There are many such groups up and down the continent, setting inspiring examples, and not least making sure to involve people living with HIV/AIDS in response. I have no doubt that Africa can lead in this crusade, and form a learning model that will help Africa and be a rescue for the *entire world to draw upon*

The United Nations system, for its part, must make the struggle for AIDS a true priority in our work throughout Africa, on an equal footing with our "OD: for peace and security.

We have opened a dialogue with the pharmaceutical industry. We are promoting transparency on prices. We are supporting preferential pricing on drugs for developing countries. Over all we are insuring that *these actions* are part of a broader coordinated strategy to strengthen health service.

UNAIDS, of course, will continue its global mission. Scanning prevention to longer-term development. And next June, the *entire membership of* the United Nations will come together for a special session *of* the general Assembly devoted to fight against AIDS world-wide.

We want to hear the big noise of awareness campaigns every where, in every country, in every continent, at every level. We want to make every man, woman, and child understand what Africans have understood -- that facing up the AIDS is a point *of honor*, not a source of shame.

AIDS requires us all to speak up and speak out; to open our eyes to suffering; to open our minds to new ways of thinking, and our arms to people living with HIV/AIDS, who need help and support.

Friends,

I stand before you as a fellow African. We know, all *of us* gathered in this room, that we came too late to this tragedy. Far too many graves accumulated in Africa as the years passed and energies were not yet fully mobilized. I Also know, as secretary – General of the Under Nations, that the response has also been painfully Slow in the great multilateral community.

But finally, finally, we are galvanized. And when history writes of the moment this was seized, let them look back at this ADF 2000 and say; “This is where the breakthrough occurred”.

For Alexandra, aged 13, and for her peers throughout the world let us show that Africa can provide the leadership needed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of AIDS.

Let us ensure we make a real difference in our life time, so that Alexandra will not to grow up believing the adults did nothing to save her country from AIDS. Let us do it before this scourge brings untold sorrow to other continents, too.

Thank you All.