

# Action for Universal Access 2010: Myths and Realities



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## UN Review Opens with Calls to Eliminate Travel Restrictions for People Living with HIV

Speakers at the opening of the United Nations (UN) High Level Meeting on AIDS issued strong challenges to member states to remove travel restrictions targeting people living with HIV.

In his statement to the General Assembly, United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon said that it is “shocking that there should still be discrimination against those at high risk, such stigma attached to individuals living with HIV.” In noting that stigma “drives the virus underground, where it can spread in the dark,” he called for changes to policies that perpetuate stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, including travel restrictions.

Speaking later in the plenary session, Elias Antoni Saca, President of the Republic of El Salvador, forcefully called for a “firm recommendation” from the UN General Assembly on the issue of travel restrictions. “From this rostrum, I urge the international community, as well as the leaders of the world, to remove walls and restrictions which hamper the free transit of persons living with HIV/AIDS.”

Ratri Suryadarma, a young positive woman from Malaysia, in her address to the General Assembly on behalf of civil society, echoed the call from over 360 organizations to eliminate travel restrictions, saying that “by revealing my HIV status publicly, I am taking a risk of being banned from entering this country and over 70 other countries around the world.”

Approximately one-third of UN member states regulate the travel of people living with HIV. Such restrictions range from requiring travelers to declare their HIV status to banning short- and long-term visits. In a press conference following the opening plenary, General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim called these restrictions a human rights violation, and said that the UN would exercise “more pressure” on states to lift restrictions during the High Level Meeting.

Plenary speakers also reiterated the goal, set by member states in 2006, to reach universal access to treatment, prevention, support and care by 2010.

Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon noted that there were 2.5 million new infections and two million deaths last year alone, a situation he called “unacceptable.” “Our challenge now is to build on what we have started,

bridge the gaps we know exist, and step up our efforts in years to come,” he stated. “We can do this only if we not only sustain but step up our levels of commitment and financing.”

“We have the tools and knowledge [to end the pandemic],” said Ms Suryadarma. “We need the will, but more than anything else, we need action!”

**For further information**

For a country by country listing of travel restrictions, see: <http://www.eatg.org/hivtravel>

More information for the media on civil society statements and actions during the High Level meeting can be found at:

<http://www.ua2010.org/en/UNGASS/Press-Centre>

For more information or to set up interviews email [media@ua2010.org](mailto:media@ua2010.org) or call:

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