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Annan presents grave Aids report at NY meeting

June 01, 2006, 18:00

Kofi Annan, the UN secretary-general, had harsh words for leaders at the start of a three-day Aids meeting in New York (NY). He presented a grave report on the non-achievement of a 2001 declaration. The report shows the epidemic is showing no sign of letting up and that women vulnerability is continuing to increase with more than 17 million women infected worldwide. This is nearly half the global total.

Annan has now challenged world leaders to face the reality of Aids. More than a 190 countries are facing results of the progress report and Aids activists have taken to the streets to protest against the lack of commitment from the international community.

Aids activists from across the globe united, demanding better treatment and effective prevention. They are disappointed in their leaders who are attending the high level Aids meeting in New York. Five years have passed since countries declared a commitment to fighting this pandemic, but 15 million people have died of Aids, and 25 million people are newly infected.

SA criticised at conference

South Africa was also criticised. Siphon Mthathi, of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), said Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the minister of health, is one of the African ministers standing firm against placing targets in the declaration and the TAC is saying it's unacceptable and demands a direct intervention.

There is an estimated 5.5 million people living with HIV in South Africa and this means 18.8% of the adult population is infected. However, the health minister says the country is on the right track.

Tshabalala-Msimang said two years ago that South Africa was the laughing stock and feels people have come round now, as they understand nutrition, they understand issues of laboratories and everything that is necessary to discharge your health duties hence she

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is satisfied. But, stigma and discrimination continue to hamper efforts.

Differences over sensitive issues are threatening to derail the conference. Delegates disagree over whether to extend the 2001 UN Declaration on the Prevention, Care and Treatment of Aids to include sex workers, gays and lesbians. The UN hopes this assembly will bring everyone together as strong partnerships are crucial if the epidemic is to be turned around.



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