

**Opening Session Address by Shri Sanjeeva Kumar
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Government of India**

**Inaugural Meeting of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition (10-11 October
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Honourable Ministers of Health, Distinguished delegates, the UNAIDS Executive Director, Michel Sidibé

Let me begin by thanking the UNAIDS for organizing the one of the most important meeting on humanity response to AIDS epidemic; a meeting that was long overdue to bring the prevention back to the forefront of AIDS response.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the global AIDS response is at an inflection point: it can have one dimensional focus on treatment and get caught into the vicious cycle of unmeetable and extremely challenging ever increasing ART need as new infections continues to happen; or it can aim for a three-dimensional approach to prevent every new infection, detect every new infection and then treat every new detection. Government of India fully endorses a three-dimensional approach with prevention on forefront which is a better path as we dream for a generation for whom AIDS epidemic is largely confined to their history books.

Dear Friends, we know that fulfilling of this dream is not going to be easy. As earlier speakers have pointed out, the world is still having lots of new HIV infections. In 2016 only, it is estimated that around 5000 people became

infected with HIV every day. In India also, we estimate to have around 220 people were newly infected with HIV every day. More worryingly, the world is witnessing the slowing down in decline in new infections in recent past clearly suggesting what we are doing is not enough. Obviously, the AIDS response need to re-strategize and re-prioritize the prevention and hence we strongly endorse the Global HIV Prevention Coalition and its 10-pronged approach as a very timely initiative.

Distinguished delegates, as like many of you, India successfully achieved the 6th Millennium Development Goal of halting and reversing the HIV epidemic. Between 2000 and 2015, new HIV infections dropped from 251 thousand to 86 thousand, a reduction of 66 percent against a global average of 35 percent. We have managed to achieve MDG 6 because of our pioneered evidence-informed comprehensive response to AIDS epidemic. However, like many of you, we also witnessed slowing down in decline of new infections.

Dear Friends, first step in responding to a problem is acknowledging the problem. we acknowledged prevention as a critical challenge in 2015 and had many initiatives to start working to multi-pronged response to this challenge. We conducted strategic assessment of key prevention needs on four aspects; newer population, newer locations, existing population and locations but with changed dynamics of networking and use of technology as a strong enabler to guide our responses. Again, no one size fits all here. Services must be designed

according to beneficiary's circumstances and hence we are advocating for "differentiated care model" across basket of prevention, detection and treatment services.

As a next step, we have developed a long term decentralised, bottom up, multi sectoral participatory national strategic plan for 2017-2024 including government, community champions and private sector. The national strategic plan provides a clear road map of AIDS free India with focus on five priority areas: accelerating the HIV prevention in key population and other 'at risk' population being the first.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a part of our multi-pronged approach for accelerating the HIV prevention; stepping up the management system is key strategy as we aim to gain more from our investments. We have achieved some very strong critical enablers to facilitate the management of National AIDS response. As you may be aware, over the years, our Parliament has been working on all possible endeavour for the elimination and prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the latest being the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, which was passed by our Parliament on 11 April 2017 and is now an "Act".

The "Act" ensured equal rights while seeking treatment, education and job by people living with HIV. The "Act" assumes significance as it protects people living with HIV from specific acts of discrimination by the state, or any

other person. It also lays down penal provisions for any discrimination practised against a person with HIV/AIDS and breach of confidentiality.

Similarly, Transgender Bill, which guarantees Rights for the transgender community, has been tabled and expected to be discussed in the upcoming session of the parliament. Now, we also have structural engagement in place with the law enforcement departments to strengthen the enabling environment for the HIV response as well as institutionalizing HIV/AIDS care continuum services in their institutions.

we are keen to further strengthen our partnerships with the community to give a strong impetus to our comprehensive AIDS response. We are working with them for community owned and community centric differential models for prevention through community investment and its empowerment for sustainable prevention programs. Interventions tailored to the risk assessment for cost efficiency and impact.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we walk this last mile, we need to be adequately resourced and strategically inclusive to increase the reach and impact of our programmes. For example, private sector is a significant player in the health care sector in India. Acknowledging this, we are collaborating with the private sector to bring them on board across the care-continuum of prevention, detection and treatment. This will significantly expand the reach of

the national programme with services available in every nook and corner of the country.

Distinguished delegates, we are committed to an AIDS free world and will continue to collaborate and contribute towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. This is a fight we win. We have already come so far. We just need to walk this last mile with collective strength. And I am confident that this prevention summit will be remembered as one of the key events in the history of AIDS response in the region as we are getting ambitious in our approach. And I am happy that I'm with you today to be a part of this important meeting and knowing that we are fighting to avoid every single new infection, avoid every AIDS related deaths and avoid every single instance of Stigma and Discrimination for an accelerated progress towards achieving ending of AIDS by 2030.

Thank You