

Ambassador Neville Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the UN

Mr Gertze, you're a co-facilitator of today's high-level meeting. What does leadership in HIV prevention look like within the global diplomacy space and is it shaping up?

This year it is 40 years since the first case of AIDS was reported and 25 years since the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, an innovative joint United Nations approach, commenced its valuable work.

Twenty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly convened its first-ever special session to address a pandemic that was causing death and devastation on a tremendous scale, overwhelming communities and health systems. AIDS was an unprecedented global challenge, and it was met with global solidarity and action. This is leadership.

Through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, Heads of State and Government made a bold commitment to ending the epidemic of AIDS by 2030.

Shortly we are opening the 4th High Level Meeting on AIDS. Ahead of the meeting the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, warned that despite intensive action and progress made against HIV in some places and population groups, HIV epidemics continue to expand in others. The SG report raise the alarm that we have failed achieving the HIV prevention targets and that we need to do more moving forward.

The HLM lays the basis for the UN system and member state commitment, so it is leadership in action. In this meeting, as referred to by the UNFPA Executive Director and co convenor of the Global Prevention Coalition Natalia Kanem, we are all focused on the critical need to lead on HIV prevention in order to get to 2030 targets and the end of AIDS.

Over the past 11 years, we have made significant progress on initiatives to expand and scale up prevention. One of the most marked priorities has been scaling up of domestic funding to the HIV Response which is critical to our global prevention strategy. We need to make the 2021 high-level meeting be the springboard for this renewed attention to HIV prevention and a decade of bold action to scale up HIV prevention programmes and reduce inequalities and root out the social determinants that fuel the HIV epidemic.

The UN and HLM brings together the renewed commitment and engagement of leaders, countries, communities and partners to make this happen.

So in summary: The global diplomacy space is taking action and yes, it is shaping up. The time for renewed focus and bold action on HIV prevention is now. Because if there is no HIV Prevention- there will be no end to this epidemic.