

World AIDS Day

1 December 2015

Statement by Michel Kazatchkine, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

The AIDS epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) is at a critical juncture and 2016 will be a decisive year for the future of the epidemic at both regional and international levels.

2016 will see our regional conference, the Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS Conference (EECAAC) take place in March, followed by the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on drugs in April, the High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS at the UN in June, the Slovakian Ministerial Conference on TB in Europe, and the International AIDS Conference in Durban in July.

2016 will be the first year of implementation of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, calling for ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 and for strengthening the integration of all sectors of society under the Health goal of the SDG Agenda.

I believe in the capacity of the region to significantly accelerate its response to AIDS, scaling up access to treatment and engaging with determination in HIV prevention. In a significant move, the Russian Federation has recently committed to double its budget for the HIV/AIDS response from 2016.

Let us also not forget that EECA is a high burden region for tuberculosis, with some of the highest levels of multidrug-resistant TB globally, and increasing rates of HIV/TB co-infection. The region is also a high burden region for hepatitis C with high rates of HIV/HCV co-infection, particularly among people who inject drugs.

World AIDS Day is a day of remembrance and a day of mobilization across the world. My deep wish is to see governments, civil society, communities, and international donors work together in the region as a stronger partnership to drive accelerated efforts against HIV/AIDS, TB, drug-resistant TB and hepatitis.

I hope that the next months will see a solution to the tragic situation and unnecessary suffering of people in the conflict areas in the region.

Committing to the UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets and to the 2030 goals means urgently escalating AIDS efforts through HIV prevention, access to testing and access to treatment; mobilizing more resources while increasing accountability and transparency; upholding human rights, fighting stigma, discrimination and criminalization of vulnerable groups; addressing social and structural determinants of disease and prioritizing individual and public health in policies.

The UN, WHO EURO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UNODC are strongly committed to support the region in its fight against HIV and in ensuring justice and dignity for all.