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**Minister of Health and Social Security Iceland,**  
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Mr. Chairman, dear colleagues and other delegates.

Globally, the HIV / AIDS epidemic is an enormous ongoing burden to humanity. The threat to humanity is of such magnitude, not only in Africa but also in Eastern Europe and Asia, that the fight against the epidemic must have the highest priority. Therefore, Iceland welcomes and supports the initiative of the Director General to provide HIV treatment to three million people by the end of 2005 – the “3 by 5” initiative. This is indeed an important and brave step toward the long-term goal of universal access to drug treatment for HIV/AIDS. Iceland has decided to support this initiative financially with 15 million Icelandic kronas.

Realizing the importance and emergency of bringing treatment to those who are most in need of it there are other issues than treatment to consider. Prevention and care must be integrated to treatment. In fact if we succeed to bring the treatment to the HIV/AIDS patients and prevent mother-to-child transmission there will be a unique opportunity to integrate treatment with information and programmes for prevention.

To be successful we need to strengthen the primary health care in countries hit hard by the epidemic. This will also create opportunity to combat other diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and vaccine preventable diseases.

At the same time we have to keep in mind that in the absence of an effective vaccine there is a threat related to treatment. The threat is resistance of HIV to drugs. Only a sustainable primary health care system securing regular drug delivery to the patients may counteract drug resistance.

Mr. Chairman/Madam Chair. Although there are many stakeholders in the fight against HIV/AIDS the role of WHO cannot be underestimated. WHO is the expert organization. It must give technical support, advice on best practice, and lead the way to go.

Thank you