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First Ladies join forces at UN to prevent new HIV infections among children



8 June 2011 –

Thirty First Ladies from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean joined forces today at the United Nations to mobilize support to achieve the goal of zero new HIV infections among children by 2015.

Around 1,000 babies are infected with HIV each day, 90 per cent of whom are in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)). HIV is also the leading cause of maternal mortality in developing countries.

At today's event, held on the opening day of the UN High-Level Meeting on AIDS, the First Ladies agreed to advocate for comprehensive access to maternal and child health services and to advance 10 action steps on return to their respective countries to ensure that children are born free from HIV and to promote life-saving HIV services for women and children.

“Women and girls must be at the centre of the AIDS response,” said Michel Sidibé, the Executive Director of UNAIDS and co-host of the event. “When women protect themselves from HIV, they protect a whole new generation from HIV.”

Among the 10 steps is supporting efforts to increase the number of centres providing free maternal, newborn and child health services, including treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV from mothers to children.

“The fact that, in still too many places, HIV-positive women are denied the right to give birth to healthy babies is a global injustice that we can end by 2015,” said Ban Soon-taek, the wife of [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon.

The First Ladies event was co-hosted by Mrs. Ban, Mr. Sidibé and Azeb Mesfin, First Lady of Ethiopia and President of the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS.

It is one of several events taking place in conjunction with the three-day High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly that brings together some 30 heads of State and government, along with senior officials, representatives of international organizations, civil society and people living with HIV, to chart the future course of the global AIDS response.

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