

High-Level Meeting to End HIV/AIDS

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Panel: Leaving no one behind: Ending stigma and discrimination through social justice and inclusive societies.

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Since HIV/AIDS was identified as a global problem, we are able to enjoy significant progress until now. But, there are still alarming ideological and political positions that pretend ignorance of the contributions made by scientific evidence and the international consensus, as well as the engaged human rights in the main legal tools for the integral assistance of a complex and multi-causal problem. The global efforts to end HIV/AIDS epidemic compromises Member States in order to find new actions against it. The main obstacle to achieve it is the international unfair dominant system, based on power relationships.

According to Cuban experience, these issues are closely related to a developing, centered on people strategy, from a comprehensive general development conception, that articulates economic increase together with assets, services and cultural values, in order to scale up and dignify the human being condition.

Cuban Revolution Policies have achieved national sovereignty, the ongoing of equity and social justice project, the beginning of many significant and radical transformations in the history of the nation and its culture. It is a cultural and complex changing process that facilitates debates and discussions among generations, cultural patrons, stratum and social class where women, girls, boys, adolescents and youth have being simultaneously beneficiary and leading features in this process of erosion of patriarchy as a paradigm of power.

Twenty years before AIDS came up, Cuba was experimenting progress on policies of assistance addressed to sexual and reproductive rights with the full involvement of the civil society. Since 1975, Cuban Women Federation guided a Comprehensive Sexuality Education Strategy recognized as a State responsibility, focused on the implementation of the full rights of women, boys,

girls, adolescents and youth, that allowed to make progress in other sexual and include the rights of the LGBTBI people.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education, based on gender and sexual rights, promotes mutual respect in relationships, equality on opportunities, development of decisions-making and a high sense of responsibility and solidarity in social relations, through an emancipator paradigm that inspires the processes related to social transformation in coordination with the Cuban nation targets: independence, socialism, democracy, prosperity and sustainability.

Scientific evidence and systematized good practices in Cuba have shown that the information and conception of risk are not enough to enhance responsible behaviors in order to fight against the epidemic, resulting in coordination of several programs of prevention, health promotion and comprehensive sexuality education, with the involvement of the State and civil society, based on the norms of our social system: "Being cultured is the only way of being free".

Ending the epidemic means the decrease of social inequality, specially the social stigma, discrimination, exclusion and disaggregation of people living with HIV and vulnerable populations. The main goal is leaving no one behind, achieving all human rights for all. Despite the political will, it requires greater ideological efforts to break down the complex and well-structured power relationships, which mostly aim to economic interests.

International legal practices that criminalize people based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as the lack of legal protection for hate crimes, are violations of the human rights and dignity that delay the efforts to fast-track the end of HIV/AIDS.

The Cuban strategy as a public policy is addressed to all population, and it is characterized by its social, inter-sectoral and community approach. According to the epidemic, key population include people living with HIV/AIDS, men who have sex with other men, trans people, victims of sexual exploitation, women and youth. It should be understood as education and protection policy in order to adopt responsibility.

The development of a permanent educational and communicative strategy, that reaches its high level in the context of the Cuban Activities against Homophobia and Transphobia, has impacted on the strengthening of a respectful culture to LGBTI people, including those who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Legal protection based on equality and non discrimination, and its inclusion on the Labor Code in 2013, have been essential to fulfill the rights of people historically discriminated, and the efforts of the Cuban State to achieve social justice and equity. During the last 5 years, the Communist Party of Cuba has enhanced related policies, recently reaffirming the principle of non discrimination as essential element for development and defining, at the same time, that legal recognition of equal rights and its fulfillment based on equality, inclusion, social justice and the fight against all forms of discrimination motivated by any harmful distinction to dignity of people, including gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, is one of the fundamental features of the socialist society paradigm.

The eradication of the epidemic is both a health problem and a matter of human rights. Fast-tracking to end the epidemic is essential for global sustainable development. All forms of violence and domination are a violation of rights. States and civil society are compromised to foster the change on these related issues. If we have accepted to come here, it is because we are engaged to achieve the proposed targets and because we know that there are resources to do it leaving no one behind.