

**Symposia Session:**

**Implementing the SDG agenda to leave no one behind: Innovations  
in Europe on the fast track to ending AIDS**

24 July 2018 14:30 - 16:00

*(15 minutes d'intervention)*

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am most delighted to participate in this symposium on "Implementing the SDG agenda to leave no one behind: innovations in Europe on the fast track to end AIDS".

As you all know, the ambitious Target 3.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which we are all committed to achieving, aims at, "End[ing] the AIDS Epidemic by 2030." This global commitment was renewed by Member States in June 2016, through the Political Declaration on HIV / AIDS.

Allowing everyone to live in good health and promoting well-being for all, at all ages, **is at the heart of the French National Health Strategy.**

HIV control is wholly embedded into this strategy.

Although new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths have declined significantly, the fight is not over until we reach our **common 2030 goal and materialize by 2020 the three "90s" set by UNAIDS<sup>1</sup>**.

**As Minister for Solidarities and Health, I am committed to translating this goal into reality in the daily lives of all French citizens and especially of the most vulnerable ones, as quickly as possible.** I am equally committed at the global level.

A paradigm shift is needed. Our health systems need to evolve. Relying mainly on curative care is no longer possible; that's why France has decided to shift towards prevention.

**Both the National Health Strategy and the "Public health Plan"** provide the framework for health and healthcare policies in France. They demonstrate the **firm commitment towards prevention** for each of our citizens, at all ages, with an emphasis on efficiency, accountability and measurable outcomes.

As you know, 35 years after the discovery of the AIDS virus, researchers from the North and the South remain as committed as they were on that first day to develop prevention strategies that could stop new infections, through a vaccine, as well as innovative therapeutic approaches to achieve remission.

#### **I- In the fight against HIV, we now have the tools**

---

<sup>1</sup> *By 2020: 90% of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy; 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.*

But, we need to promote a **strong message** on evidence-based and combination prevention.

- We need to **hammer, again and again, the importance of condoms, particularly among young people** who did not live the dark years of the epidemic. They are largely unaware of how HIV is transmitted and sometimes think that AIDS is a standard chronic disease.
- We need to **support pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and act for its adoption among the key populations**. France was the first European country to authorize PrEP and to cover 100% of its costs, without waiting for marketing authorization. PrEP is also a step towards testing HIV as well as other STIs, and towards comprehensive care.
- We need to **ensure fast and benevolent access to post-exposure treatment (PET)**.
- We need to **increase awareness and knowledge on the treatment as a mean of prevention**, now conceptualized by the actors under the terms "*Undetectable EQUALS Untransmissible*" (*U=U*). Conveying the message that an undetectable viral load prevents the transmission of HIV is of utmost importance, especially when fighting stigma in people living with HIV.

**Of course, we also face a major screening challenge, to reduce the "hidden epidemic" and allow patients care as early as possible.**

Nowadays, the HIV testing offer is manifold.

In order to increase screening opportunities, France has invested in **outreach strategies**, in addition to the traditional serological screening.

**We fund screening through rapid tests for diagnostic orientation (TROD).**

**This allows to get closer to the individuals and I want here to recall the major role of community screening in this approach.**

We have also had the **HIV self-testing tool** (since 2015) available in pharmacies and, free of charge, in **screening centers** (CeGIDD) and in associations.

**II- With all these tools, the main challenge today is to continue our actions but also constantly re-examine our strategies to make them ever more effective.**

**1. Social and territorial inequalities** of access to health care are **unacceptable**. We have to fight against them and to intervene on risk factors as well as on socio-environmental determinants as early as possible and in a life-long approach to health. We have to target most particularly those who are far from health services, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

**2. We must ensure equal rights for all in the area of sexual health and respond to the specific needs of the most vulnerable populations and those most-at-risk of HIV.**

In 2016, in France, the number of new HIV seropositive diagnoses was estimated at around 6,000. This number has decreased only by 5% as compared to 2013.

**Men who have sex with men (MSM) and heterosexuals born abroad (of whom three quarter were born in sub-Saharan Africa) remain the two most affected groups**, accounting respectively for 44% and 39% of new HIV diagnoses in 2016.

Our actions must reach those populations most exposed to sexual violence, HIV, STIs and viral hepatitis: women, gay men, young men who have sex with men, trans people, lesbians, people in prostitution, people in prison, drug users, migrants...

**Our response to their specific needs requires :**

- Improved knowledge of key populations by professionals and actors in the field of sexual health;
- Improved involvement of targeted populations, with the promotion and adoption of non-judgmental postures;
- Continued implementation of harm reduction strategies.

**3. We need to change social representations related to gender identity, sexual orientation, age or disability, as well as for people**

**living with HIV.** We know that discriminations, representations or prejudices within society can be detrimental, including in terms of health.

What we need to look for, support and expand, are interventions that value a person and needs-centered approach.

**Sexual rights, for everyone, must be advocated, hammered, not to let obscurantism gain ground.**

To respond to these issues, we need to engage in a **comprehensive approach for sexual and reproductive health**, aiming, in particular, at guarantying to each individual a safe, autonomous and fulfilling sexual life.

I have decided to set up a **road map** of concrete actions for the next three years. It was elaborated with all stakeholders: professional associations (general medicine, infectiology, gynecology), non-governmental associations, but also with the involvement of various ministries such as the Ministry for National Education, or for Higher education, Research and Innovation.

We need to propose a holistic and positive approach to sexual health and, in particular, to improve the health pathways for STIs, including HIV and viral hepatitis. Let me state again, that the development of diversified prevention and especially of PrEP, are major actions to reduce the "hidden epidemic", alongside the strengthening of screening actions.

We also have, in France, remote territories that are facing a major burden in terms of epidemic; taking into account the specificities of the overseas territories is essential to act more effectively.

We must also anticipate the evolution of practices and learn how to respond. Public health actors are concerned that chemsex plays a key role in maintaining the dynamics of the HIV epidemic and increases HCV infections, particularly in the homosexual population.

There is therefore a strong challenge of improving knowledge on this phenomenon and its evolution, in order to define the most appropriate approach involving communities' stakeholders.

**III- France remains involved at the international level, to reach our collective goal by 2030**

**As you all know, for more than thirty years,** France has made the fight against the major pandemics, and more particularly against HIV/AIDS, one of the top priorities of its global health and development policies.

This commitment translates into a major political and financial involvement with the main multilateral organizations involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I am referring of course to the Global Fund against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to UNITAID, of which France is the first contributor, to UNAIDS as well as WHO.

This involvement, along with the efforts dedicated to research through our National Agency for Research in Aids and Hepatitis, - ANRS, INSERM and other research organizations – in collaboration with several research teams in developing countries, form a consistent and complementary support to the fight against HIV at international level.

It offers a strong continuum and spectrum of supporting interventions that goes from conducting political advocacy and research for solutions, dealing with access barriers to innovation, to funding large scale interventions.

Within each of these international bodies, France promotes innovation, access for all and especially the most vulnerable, to prevention, treatment and care, towards achieving universal health coverage.

**This commitment was reaffirmed by our President, Emmanuel Macron, through his decision to host, in 2019, the Sixth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund.** This Conference is expected to raise funds for the period 2020-2022, through the mobilization of the entire international community and the private sector. It represents a tremendous opportunity to promote global health issues and move towards the goal of eliminating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria as threats to public health by 2030.

France has participated in the creation of the Global Fund and is the second largest historical contributor with more than 4.2 billion euros since 2002.

We have invested up to 1.5 billion in UNITAID since 2007 and we are staying highly committed as first donor. France is proud to be at the origin of what is now an international agency for innovation in global health. In a world of constrained resources and high ambitions, innovation shall provide higher impact to each euro we invest. It shall allow to develop better tools to fit the needs of the underserved. It shall accelerate, 2030 being already so close to us, the pace of the fight against HIV with more powerful, easy-to-use, acceptable and robust tools.

And because innovation is a solution only if it meets the needs of the population and is properly embedded in their daily life, we need to innovate to make sure that preventing, screening, testing, and treatment interventions are designed for individuals and not for systems.

The reaffirmation of our commitment to the international fight against HIV takes place within the broader context of the strengthening of France's official development support and the decision to make health, education and equality between women and men, the main priorities of the French commitment to the world.

\* \*  
\*

Ladies and gentlemen,

We still have big challenges ahead of us, each of us within our own territories, but also collectively, to reach the UNAIDS targets for 2020 and towards the ultimate goal set by the SDGs for 2030.

I am, like you and other political decision-makers, concerned about our ability to achieve this goal. Although the number of new infections and deaths related to HIV / AIDS is decreasing, the HIV pandemic remains a major challenge. Reducing the incidence of HIV requires a sustained effort. The persistence of a high infection rate in certain populations, such as young homosexuals, and especially women and girls, could lead to a rebound of the epidemic, which would be catastrophic in terms of public health, cost and would also impact our ability to remobilize communities and funding.

We are all convinced that in the fight against HIV, a new step is needed. We need other prevention tools, obviously to intensify the search for a vaccine, but also to include this fight in a global effort to reduce coinfections, other causes of morbidity, the weight of chronic non-communicable diseases, in a the prospect of improving the health of populations, often the most fragile, at the global level. In this respect, when we observe the challenges we have had to face, the fight against HIV / AIDS has been exemplary of this need to move away from a silo approach. It is at this price that we can hope for success.

**In this fight against HIV, I want also to emphasize the leading role of the civil society's advocacy.**

Associations, health professionals, learned societies, historical activists or new activists, you challenge us, the political or

*Seul le prononcé fait foi*

institutional decision-makers, you make sure that we do not lower our guard and I want here to welcome your commitment.

Thank you very much.