

AIDS Healthcare Foundation Europe (AHF Europe)**Statement at the 66th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe****Provisional Agenda item 5(d): Action plan for the health sector response to HIV in the WHO European region**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of AIDS Healthcare Foundation Europe. We are deeply concerned with the current state of HIV epidemic in WHO Europe region.

Though there are advancements in novel HIV therapies and care delivery for people who live with HIV and understanding that every person who lives with HIV should be diagnosed and have access to HIV, this is far from reality in the WHO Europe region. Eastern Europe sees a continuous increase of HIV cases; it is also true for Western Europe where infections are rising among men who have sex with men. Undiagnosed HIV is a major problem.

Many people living with HIV are suffering from co-infections with tuberculosis and viral hepatitis, which makes the disease more deadly and increases the burden on health system greatly. People from key affected populations: people who use drugs, prisoners, men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender people, migrants, street children are disproportionately affected both by the burden of the disease and low treatment coverage.

Clearly, business is not finished and bold actions are needed.

We welcome the Action plan for the health sector response to HIV in the WHO European region. We align with the strategic directions described in the plan. The action plan sets ambitious targets, but after 30 years of HIV epidemic and limited impact in parts of the region, we need to be daring and courageous. There are regions that have much less resources and are more advanced in fight of HIV than Europe. To turn the tide of HIV epidemic in Africa it was possible by the united efforts of world political leaders, African heads of the governments and communities affected by HIV.

We call on the Europe political leaders to unanimously recognize the goal for 2030 to end HIV epidemic as a public health threat in Europe as part of their political agenda.

To achieve the goal we need to keep the promise to end AIDS, work tirelessly to reduce new infections using proven prevention interventions, dramatically increase HIV testing and linkage to care, increase HIV treatment coverage and reduce deaths related to AIDS and TB, deaths, which are preventable now in the 21 century. This can only be done by strong political and financial commitment from the member states.

We need to change the way we think about HIV as a disease and people who live with HIV. HIV is a chronic disease not as a condition that people need to die from. People who live with HIV are valuable citizens of European society.

We recognize WHO work on current priorities for health systems strengthening, people-centered approach, health system reform and related to it task shifting as effective to address HIV as a chronic condition. AHF Europe is willing to work together with the member States and all stakeholders to make Europe free from HIV by 2030 and support each and everyone person living with HIV. Thank you.