



President-elect Barack Obama

Hello everyone – thank you for allowing me to send my greetings and to share a few words with you on this special day. It's my privilege to thank Pastor Rick, Kay and all of you for your leadership in the struggle against HIV/AIDS and your steadfast commitment to eradicating this disease. On this 20th anniversary of World Aids Day, I think it's appropriate to look back for a moment to when this day was first observed. In 1988, when ministers of health from around the world first had the notion to set aside a day to even highlight the threat of HIV/AIDS, they faced widespread ignorance and fear. Back then, many refused to acknowledge the existence of this disease, let alone the devastating impact it was having on families and communities around the world. Today, because of the work of people like you, women in Kenya who were widowed by the disease, and once shunned by society, have banded together to support and empower each other. Scientists around the world are discovering and engineering new medicines, to give people with HIV/AIDS another chance at life. NGOs and faith-based institutions are marshalling the best of the human spirit to help those affected, and world governments are coming together to address the humanitarian crisis the pandemic has left in its wake. I salute President Bush for his leadership in crafting a plan for AIDS relief in Africa and backing it up with funding dedicated to saving lives and preventing the spread of the disease. In my Administration, we will continue this critical work to address the crisis around the world. But we must also recommit ourselves to addressing the AIDS crisis here in the United States with a strong national strategy of education, prevention and treatment, focusing on those communities at greatest risk. This strategy must be based on the best available science and built on the foundation of a strong healthcare system. But in the end, this epidemic can't be stopped by government alone, and money alone is not the answer either. All of us must do our part. This year's slogan, "Stop Aids, Keep the Promise," is a timely one. In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he asked, "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" We as leaders must continue to sound that call and encourage others to see themselves as leaders in this fight – and we must reaffirm our own commitment to confront and defeat this disease once and for all. Thank you for your extraordinary work that each of you do every day. I am humbled by your devotion to this cause and look forward to working with you and new partners in this effort in the years ahead. God bless you all.

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations General Secretary

Pastor Warren, President Bush, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to send greetings to this Forum. AIDS continues to be one of the most devastating epidemics in history. The disease is still one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide and is the No. 1 killer in Africa. Yet, there has also been remarkable progress. Fewer people are being infected. Fewer people are dying. We are making inroads against the stigma of discrimination. We have to maintain this momentum. We must protect people from the impact of the global financial crisis. Cutbacks in treatment and research would have devastating consequences. The need to lead on AIDS is as real and urgent as ever. I congratulate President Bush on his legacy of leadership in this fight. The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief has made it possible for people in countries hardest hit by the disease to receive treatment. The United States is now the largest contributor to the global response and will spend \$48 billion over the next five years, not only on AIDS but also on malaria and tuberculosis. We are not powerless in the face of disease. I pledge to do my utmost in this struggle, and I will count on you to join me. Your engagement and support can mean the difference between life and death for millions of people around the world. Thank you.

Tony Blair, Former British Prime Minister

Hello, everyone. It's a real privilege for me to play a small part in what is a big day. World AIDS Day continues to demonstrate our global determination to defeat HIV/AIDS. It's a show of worldwide unity against a disease which makes no distinction between age, gender, sexuality, color, race or creed. And it shows our international solidarity with those living with HIV/AIDS. It's a sure sign of our belief that in time, we can and will defeat HIV/AIDS as we have done with other major diseases which once ravaged the world. And on this World AIDS Day, it's a particular pleasure for me to add my congratulations to my friend President Bush on the award of the "International Medal of PEACE" for his work to promote global health. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Malaria Initiative and the global funds provided by his Administration, African countries, in particular, have been able to increase their health assets and take a major step forward in delivery of health services. President Bush's efforts have saved literally millions of lives, but many of those who've benefited will never be able to say thank you face-to-face. So, it is on their behalf we say – for your leadership, your determination, your insight and your investment – thank you, Mr. President.

I also want to send my good wishes to Rick Warren and his PEACE Plan on this important occasion. You know it's often difficult for governments to reach the most distant, rural, illiterate and poorest people providing them with health and education. People have to be able recognize the early onset of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria, and then take themselves or their child to a clinic and take them there in good time. Otherwise all the aid in the world is to no avail.

So, faith communities have a unique role in helping to reach them, which is why this is such a powerful partnership. Rick Warren's work in Rwanda is a fine example of how people of faith not only provide moral leadership but practical and desperately needed assistance for the poor and to make sure the sick get the care they need. President Bush has shown what can be achieved when America provides global leadership in humanitarian assistance in the places where the world needs it most. In a couple of months, when the torch is passed to a new generation, I'm confident that the leadership that President Bush has shown will be an inspiration for the new leadership that President Obama will bring to the fight against HIV/AIDS. So, on this World AIDS Day, we remember those who've suffered from the effects of this terrible disease, we honor those like President Bush who've done so much to tackle it around the world, and we anticipate the determination that a new administration can also bring to this vital cause. To President Bush, to Rick Warren, to everyone there today with you – thank you and well done.

His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda

On this World AIDS Day, I would like to honor President George Bush, who has through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief – PEPFAR – made a remarkable contribution to combating this disease globally. In my country of Rwanda, PEPFAR has made a tremendous difference. For example, more than 50,000 persons living with HIV and AIDS have access to anti-retroviral drugs and treatment. For the first time in the history of our country, we are making significant progress towards defeating malaria with the contribution of President Bush's Malaria Initiative. Mr. President, your contribution to global health has been the key to our success, and we thank you very much. You have set very high standards that we hope others shall follow. We wish you the best in your future endeavors and hope to see you again soon in Rwanda.

Bono, Musical Artist and Humanitarian Activist

Hello, my name is Bono. I'm your friendly neighborhood rock star, and I run the Capitol. This is a recording studio. This is where I work. This is the reason I'm not with you today. I would dearly love to be with you today, the 20th anniversary of the first official World AIDS Day. I really feel a little left out not being there, because it's a big day in the life of an activist, because we're stopping today to mark a moment, and that moment is what's been achieved in the fight against this tiny little virus that's caused so much damage – HIV/AIDS. I want to thank President Bush, for his leadership. He is a hero. You are a hero, sir, in the fight against this deadly disease. I'd like to toast your "Mrs.," the First Lady, Laura. I'd like to toast Rick Warren for his leadership. So many of you in the room I've gotten to know over the years and I'm in an awe of what you've all accomplished. Three million people on anti-retroviral drugs. That's 3 million people who owe their lives to the United States of America. I think there's nearly 2 million of them that are Africans, paid for by PEPFAR, the President's own program. It's a lousy name by the way, PEPFAR... I'm a songwriter. You can take it from me, although I am in a band called U2, which is an acronym as well. But it's an extraordinary thing you've all achieved. When I think of the mother-to-child transmissions – which is one of the most upsetting of all – to think that you've interrupted that transmission, I think it's nearly 12 million times, so, much more to do, I know, but it's a day to stop, and give thanks, and, and, God bless America.

Melinda Gates, Co-chair and Trustee of The Melinda & Bill Gates Foundation

Mr. President, Bill and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership in the fight against AIDS, malaria and other diseases affecting the world's poorest people. All Americans should take great pride in the President's Malaria Initiative and PEPFAR – the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. These investments are achieving real results and are bringing hope and opportunity to millions of people around the world. Bill and I have seen this lifesaving impact first-hand. I'll never forget visiting a vibrant PEPFAR clinic in Durban, South Africa. The well-trained staff, the lifesaving AIDS medicines, the lab equipment – and even the building itself - had all been made possible by the generosity of the American people.

Bill Gates, Co-chair and Trustee of The Melinda & Bill Gates Foundation

Mr. President, as Melinda said, PEPFAR and the President's Malaria Initiative are both terrific success stories, and we hope they will continue to flourish in the coming years. Of course, we're facing difficult economic times, and the next Administration and Congress will have to make some very tough spending choices. But investments in proven global health initiatives are among the wisest our country can make. Having made so much progress in recent years, this is no time to turn back. Mr. President, thank you for being a champion for global health and for creating a legacy of hope that will last for many years to come.

Dr. Michael Kazatchkine, Executive Director of The Global Fund

Good afternoon from Geneva. My name is Michael Kazatchkine. I am the executive director of The Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. I would like to congratulate President Bush on winning the "International Medal of PEACE" for his efforts in global health. The Global Fund is one of the instruments President Bush and the U.S. Congress, through their generous funding, have used in this effort and in result has saved millions of lives. I look forward to working with President Bush and President-elect Obama in the future to continue the great progress we have seen of our joint efforts over the past years. Let me also warmly thank Rick Warren for his tireless work for good and to commend the Global PEACE Plan efforts to engage all sectors of society in the fight against disease worldwide. Thank you.