Statement by

Ambassador Bhagwant S. Bishnoi,

Deputy Permanent Representative of India
to the United Nations

on Agenda Item 10:

'Implementation of The Declaration Of Commitment on
HIV/AIDS and The Political Declaration On HIV/AIDS'

at

The United Nations General Assembly

New York

June 08, 2015
Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary General for his report titled ‘Future of the AIDS response: building on past achievements and accelerating progress to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030’ (document A/69/856).

We have set ourselves an ambitious goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. For this to be achieved, international commitment must be renewed and strengthened with regard to the ten priority targets set in the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS.

Mr. President,

As far as India is concerned, the Government has undertaken targeted interventions for People living with HIV, high risk groups and bridge populations. A strategy for the period 2012-2017 is in place which is based on lessons learnt from the previous phases of the programme. This aims to accelerate the process of reversal by further strengthening the epidemic response. We have also involved the corporate sector, NGOs and other stakeholders as partners towards this end.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding significant global progress in overall terms, there is concern that this has been uneven in the priority areas of the Political Declaration. At the same time, the HIV epidemic has been seen to be on the rise in new regions.

The Secretary General’s report has pointed out the need for accelerated efforts to ensure that required levels of international and domestic funding are available to stabilize progress and maintain HIV related services. Of particular importance is scaled-up anti-retroviral therapy (ART) to extend lives and improve the quality of life. Global efforts have ensured that the target of 15 million people receiving ART by 2015 has nearly been met. While this is a matter of some satisfaction, we also need to reach the remaining 22 million people infected with HIV.

The challenge before us is not of unavailability of medical treatment, but of accessibility arising from its high cost in many developing countries. We need to bridge this North-South divide if we are to achieve the 2030 target.

The Indian pharmaceutical industry has been plugging this critical gap by producing high quality affordable drugs for use in India and also in other developing countries. India is committed to using all flexibilities allowed under the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement of the World Trade Organization to ensure the availability of affordable and quality medicine to all people living with HIV.

It is, however, regrettable that these TRIPS flexibilities, which are critical for the provision of public health to millions across the developing world, are being questioned in some quarters. It would be most callous if we were to allow narrow considerations of commerce to deny the most basic and the most fundamental human right - the right to life. We would like to take the opportunity of this debate to draw attention to this matter.
Mr. President,

While governments no doubt need to augment their national efforts, it is equally evident that many developing countries will not be able to meet these challenges themselves. The need for international solidarity to ensure an integrated and holistic approach that includes effective prevention strategies, access to low cost affordable treatment for all and scaled up treatment and sound health systems cannot be over-emphasized if we are to end HIV/AIDS by 2030.

Thank you, Mr. President.