

## **Speech High level Conference Right to health, right to life - HIV and human rights in the European Union and its neighbouring countries**

-Making laws right - promoting enabling legal frameworks for HIV and human rights-

I would like to welcome you all to this very important panel on making laws right-promoting enabling legal frameworks for HIV and human rights.

I consider very appropriate the timing of the conference given the need of a stronger strategy on HIV and other communicable diseases for the period to come (2014-2020). We need fresh and appropriate measures, including sufficient funding at the right level to better control this century's pandemics.

This new strategy should be more appropriate to the current situation, taking into account also the negative impact of the social and economic situation over the state of health of our population and therefore, an increasing risk of HIV infection and prevalence of poverty related diseases. A new strategy should take these elements into account and should ensure affordable antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS, to reinforce HIV prevention, and HIV co-infection, and end all forms of discrimination. Overall, Member States have to scale up their efforts to improve preventive actions, as well as, access to treatment, care and support for their populations.

I think if we speak about HIV/AIDS, we should also take into account the associated diseases like tuberculosis or viral hepatitis. TB alone, if not properly treated, can kill 7 out of 10 people infected with HIV. Despite this alarming situation the number of patients co infected with HIV and TB that are following an antiretroviral treatment is falling behind.

TB alone kills 1.4 million people each year worldwide and 7 people per hour in the European region, representing the second leading cause of death from an infectious disease after HIV. Not to mention that from the 8.7 million new cases of TB, 13% are co-infected with HIV. According to WHO, in 2011, 1.4 million people died of TB, including almost one million deaths among HIV-negative individuals and 430 000 among people who were HIV-positive.

I consider, that we definitely need an integrated approach to fight TB and HIV, as well as, we need to increase the cooperation between programmes addressing one or the other infections.

I am looking forward to hear our speakers' views regarding the appropriate legal framework to deal with HIV, as well as to see how we can cope better on a time of economic and social crisis with this great public health threat.