

Statement by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice

World AIDS Day 2008

In 2003, President George W. Bush launched the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) – the largest international commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history. As a result of this initiative, there are HIV-positive mothers in Zambia giving birth to healthy babies. There are health care workers being trained to provide HIV counseling and testing to their communities in Vietnam. And there is a hospice in South Africa that once mourned the lives lost on World AIDS Day that is now celebrating each life saved by antiretroviral treatment. These stories are replicated in countless communities around the world where HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services are supported by the American people. It is in this spirit, on World AIDS Day 2008, that we “Celebrate Life.”

During times of economic crisis, some may feel more comfortable turning inward - foregoing our commitment to fighting HIV/AIDS globally. But reneging on our commitments to the world's poor cannot be an austerity measure, because this effort is more than just an expression of America's compassion. This effort is a vital investment in the free, prosperous and peaceful international order that fundamentally serves our national interest.

Together, the American people and countries around the world have proven that, by working in partnership, the seemingly impossible is possible.