

Press Releases: Remarks at the PEPFAR Faith Communities and HIV Technical Summit

Remarks
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Secretary of State

Loy Henderson Auditorium
Washington, DC
November 27, 2018

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, good morning everyone. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to welcome you all to the State Department. It is wonderful, and I am proud that we have so many partners linking arms with us in the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

I want to thank Ambassador Deborah Birx and our entire PEPFAR team. You all

do amazing work, and putting the summit together has been amazing too. I know great things will come for the world from the work that you and your team are doing.

As the Secretary of State, I know as well as anyone that reading the world news can often be a real downer. If you open the paper or log on to Twitter in the morning, you see a litany of things that make you sad and make you shudder and make you worry and pray. It can seem like not a single good thing is happening.

But dig further. As men and women of faith, we know that we do not inhabit a hopeless place. Good things are happening in the world all over. They don't often generate headlines every day, but when we see things like the massive success of PEPFAR we can have renewed confidence that there is still good news to tell, that the world can be a better place, and that America is still the greatest national force for good in human history.

It's now 15 years ago when President George W. Bush established PEPFAR as a 21st century statement of America's concern for the most vulnerable. President Trump has remained committed to these efforts to end the AIDS pandemic.

Since the launch in 2003 of PEPFAR – thanks to strong support from three presidents, multiple Congresses, and our many partners around the globe – we have saved more than 17 million lives. We have prevented millions of new HIV infections. And AIDS-related deaths globally have been cut in half since their peak in 2004. Quite simply, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has gone from crisis towards control.

And at every step of the way, people like you – faith leaders, faith-based organizations, and communities of faith – have been cornerstones of our effort. You were in the communities hardest hit by AIDS long before the pandemic began, and we know you will be there long after the epidemic is controlled. In some parts of the world, in some places, faith-based institutions provide as much as 70 percent of healthcare delivery to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. That's a remarkable testimony to your passion, your caring, your commitment, and to your love for your fellow man.

Because of the clear value of faith-based organizations in the fight against HIV/AIDS, the United States is proud to invest in you, you who are doing this outstanding work. Our investment to faith-based organizations is institutional, not ideological. We need to keep reaching the populations we are missing in our HIV/AIDS response, accelerate progress in controlling the pandemic, and ensure that our efforts are sustainable as well.

This summit is designed to allow each of you to share exciting ideas how to make this happen, to explore what can we – what we can do to expand our efforts, and to ensure that the pandemic is indeed controlled.

The [2018 PEPFAR Strategy Progress Report](#), which I released this past September, shows the strides we have taken – strides we have taken together. Guided by the Trump administration's PEPFAR Strategy, up to 13 high-HIV-

burden countries are poised to achieve epidemic control within the next two years. What I am particularly proud of in this strategy is that PEPFAR and our partners are firmly focused on populations that are often being left behind, including young women, men, and children.

I know you as faith leaders will appreciate this analogy when I say this concern for the most vulnerable resembles Jesus' parable of the lost sheep. He says that a good shepherd goes after that one lost sheep at all costs, even though he already has the other 99 in his flock. Even though our faith-based partners have already helped save millions of lives, we know that we will not get complacent. And thank you for that. You all are driven by a higher motivation, and we will see this work through to its end.

Today, I am also pleased to announce PEPFAR's latest annual program results. As of September 30th of this year, PEPFAR supports over 14.6 million people with lifesaving antiretroviral treatment. This is up from the only 50,000 who were on treatment in Africa when the program began back in 2003.

I am also pleased to announce new and exciting progress toward achieving epidemic control in Nigeria and Ethiopia. We aren't announcing the specific data sets just yet, but Ethiopia is on the verge of achieving HIV epidemic control – a remarkable accomplishment. And Nigeria may be closer to achieving HIV epidemic control than was previously thought, or even previously thought possible. This is remarkable work. The majority of Nigerians who report being on HIV treatment have suppressed their viral replication, allowing them to thrive and not to transmit the virus.

There's one more great story that I want to share with you this morning. It's a story about PEPFAR mattering to all Americans. By focusing resources where the HIV burden is the greatest – and where the highest impacts can be achieved – PEPFAR demonstrates the power of U.S. foreign assistance when it is tied to accountability, transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness.

So many times in Washington, the proposed solution to every problem is simply more money, regardless of whether it actually solves a problem. But the investment we ask taxpayers to make in PEPFAR is clearly paying dividends of life and hope. We can measure it, and we can see the effectiveness. And you all are in good part responsible for that.

Today, a generation that could have been lost is instead thriving and building a brighter future. PEPFAR has truly been one of the great American triumphs of the 21st century. And we're proud to continue this work alongside each of you, our faith-based partners.

Thank you all. Thank you all for being here. And may the Good Lord bless each and every one of you. Thank you. (Applause.)

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