

AIDS plan 'a major step backwards'

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AIDS organizations accused the United States of weakening a U.N. proposal by removing target numbers and making other changes, The Financial Times reported.

The administration of President George Bush also has diluted references to condoms and other AIDS-preventing methods in the proposed 2006 U.N. declaration, the newspaper said of draft documents it had obtained.

The intent was to remove references offensive to religious groups, the report said.

"This is a major step backwards," said Jodi Jacobson of Washington women's health group Change.

"The U.S. doesn't want to commit to any targets by which it can be held accountable, and it doesn't want anyone else to commit either," Jacobson told the newspaper.

Coincidentally, UNAIDS released a report that showed 21 countries had met the U.N.'s 2001 target of providing medicine by 2005, but progress lagged in many nations, including India, Nigeria and South Africa.

The report also said the growth of AIDS may be beginning to slow, but 40 million people are now living with HIV.

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