

AIDS epidemic's end by 2030 seen: UN official

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A top UN official said the global AIDS epidemic could be over by 2030 because of progress made in treatment and control of the disease.

"I think that 2030 is a viable target to say that we have reached the end of the epidemic," said Luis Loures, a deputy executive director of UNAIDS, the UN agency leading the fight against HIV/AIDS.

"HIV will continue existing as a case here or there but not at the epidemic level we have today," he told journalists late Wednesday.

Three million new HIV infections are reported each year and the disease, which attacks the immune system, kills 1.7 million people a year.

"We can get to the end of the epidemic because we have treatments and ways to control the infection," said Loures, who is in Panama to discuss AIDS strategy with UN agencies in Latin America. "We are making progress, without a doubt."

Two decades ago the average annual cost of treatment per person with HIV was \$19,000 while today it is \$150 thanks to [generic drugs](#).

Moreover, people with HIV are getting treatment earlier, which retards the disease's development.

According to UNAIDS, the annual incidence of new infections has fallen 20 percent over the past decade, and in 25 countries, including 13

in sub-Saharan Africa, it has fallen by 50 percent.

Over the past two years, the number of people who have obtained treatment for HIV has increased by 60 percent.

"The challenge is now for the most vulnerable groups," like homosexual males, [sex workers](#) and [drug users](#) who do not seek treatment for fear of being stigmatized or criminally prosecuted, Loures said.

"If we do not succeed in controlling the epidemic among these groups, AIDS will stay with us," he warned.

At the end of 2011, there were 34 million people living with HIV, 69 percent of them in sub-Saharan Africa where one in 20 adults have the disease.

"Today, there are a number of cases where we have evidence of a cure and that gives us great hope," Loures said.

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