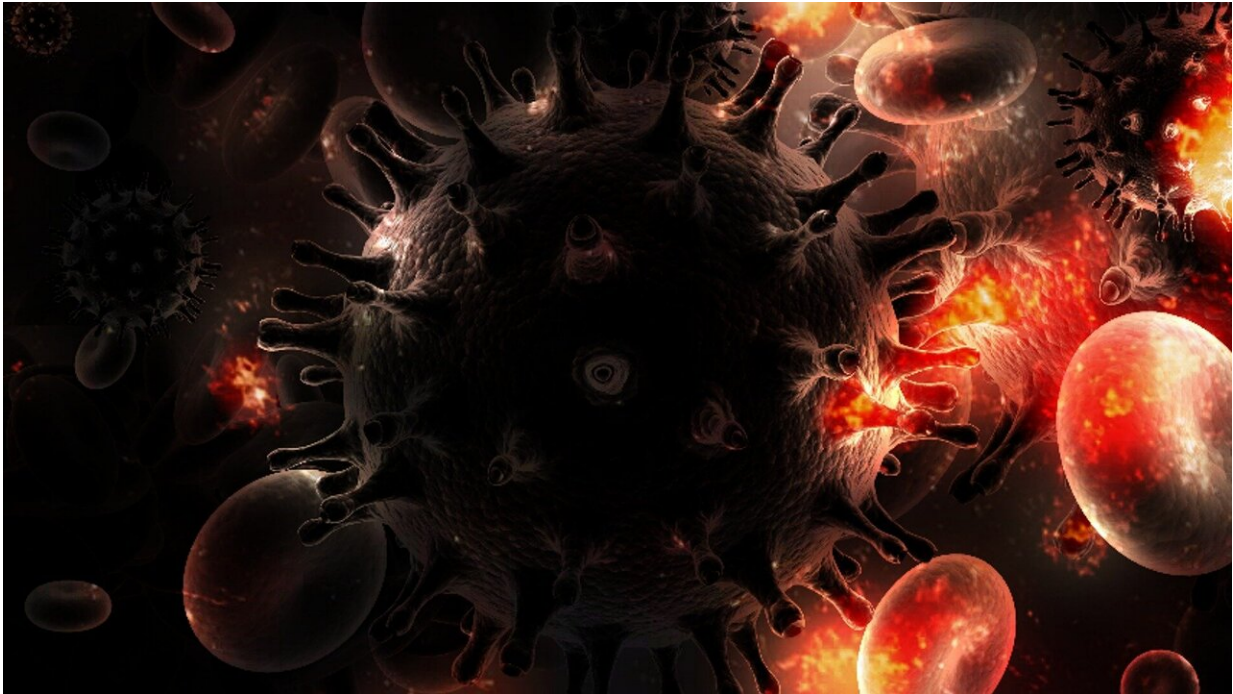


UN optimistic on conquering AIDS by 2030

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Forty years on since the first AIDS cases were reported, the United Nations said Thursday it was cautiously optimistic that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—the virus that causes the disease—could be beaten by 2030.

The UNAIDS agency said at least 40 countries were on track to achieve a 90-percent drop in AIDS-related mortality by 2030, including nine

countries in eastern and southern Africa.

In a report, the Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS said that 37.6 million people worldwide were living with HIV in 2020.

Of those, 27.4 million were receiving treatment—more than three times the 7.8 million in 2010.

The roll-out of affordable, quality treatment is estimated to have averted 16.2 million deaths since 2001, UNAIDS said.

Over the decade, the number of AIDS-related deaths fell by 43 percent to 690,000 in 2020, in large part due to the roll-out of [antiretroviral therapy](#), said UNAIDS.

But progress in reducing new HIV infections was slower—down 30 percent since 2010, with 1.5 million people newly infected with the virus last year compared to 2.1 million in 2010.

UNAIDS said that AIDS-related illnesses remain the leading cause of [death](#) among women aged 15 to 49 in sub-Saharan Africa.

Six out of seven new HIV infections among adolescents aged 15 to 19 years in the region are among girls.

\$29 billion call

UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima said she was "cautiously optimistic" that the 2030 target could be met.

"High-performing countries have provided paths for others to follow," she told reporters.

"We are asking governments to focus on the inequalities that stop people from accessing services. If they can close those gaps for the particular groups that are most at risk, we can end AIDS by 2030."

UNAIDS set new targets to reach by 2025: bringing HIV services to 95 percent of those who need them; reducing annual HIV infections to fewer than 370,000; and reducing AIDS-related deaths to fewer than 250,000 by 2025.

The agency said an investment of \$29 billion a year was needed.

Byanyima called for the same political will that has gone into tackling the COVID-19 pandemic to be applied towards the fight against AIDS.

She said the coronavirus crisis had had several worrying impacts, notably stretching the health systems of countries suffering from the highest HIV burden, while accessing services had become more difficult due to lockdowns.

"AIDS remains unfinished business," she said.

"I call on all activists the world over to renew our energy and our drive to push towards ending AIDS by 2030."

The fifth UN General Assembly high-level meeting on AIDS takes place from June 8 to 10.

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