

# “It always seems impossible until it’s done” –Nelson Mandela



When the global response to HIV/AIDS began there were 10,000 new infections daily; 50,000 people on treatment in Sub-Saharan Africa; health systems totally overwhelmed; and life expectancy declined more than 20 years in some countries. Comparing the quest to end the HIV/AIDS pandemic to President Kennedy’s challenge to put a man on the moon, new Global AIDS Coordinator Ambassador Deborah Birx described her vision for the third phase of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to a Town Hall audience. She set the tone for her vision by describing the situation today in which 6.7 million people are on life-saving treatment; over 1 million babies have been born HIV-free; 4.7 million men have received voluntary male circumcision services; 17 million people received care and support; 21 million people in priority populations have been reached with prevention interventions. In recognition of economic realities, Ambassador Birx said that PEPFAR will need to do more with less and work to expand services by shifting resources toward proven interventions, concentrating on where they are most needed to have the highest impact.

*“We have begun to change the course of the pandemic but we are not done. This week alone over 4,000 babies were infected, over 7,000 young women were infected and over 24,000 people living with HIV died in Africa.”*

Resting on pillars of **accountability, transparency and impact** Dr. Birx’s strategy focuses on expanding impact, efficiency,

sustainability, partnerships and human rights as the blueprint for an AIDS-Free Generation. "We are going to deliver the right thing (core interventions) in the right place (geographically focused; reaching the most vulnerable effectively) at the right time and show how we will achieve success," Ambassador Birx concluded. "I'm passionate about the possibility of achieving this goal and am reminded that Nelson Mandela said, 'It seems impossible until it's done.' Every single target we have will seem impossible until it's done. Controlling the pandemic may seem impossible but I think it can be done. That's where each of you every day. . .need to be focused and committed to this goal because we can do it and we can do it together."