

**Opening comments – Health Attaché**  
**Health Information Management Systems Meeting**  
**May 14, 2008**  
**Cape Town**

I would like to welcome everyone as well, on behalf of the PEPFAR team, to this meeting. I apologize that I am unable to attend the meeting in person and give these remarks myself due to unexpected circumstances.

This meeting is particularly important as the HIV and AIDS situation in South Africa continues to be of major concern as the need for programs still outpaces our ability to respond. As we move forward, not only will the overall response need to increase , but the information we need to make decisions about future programs will also need to be up to date and accurate. South Africa has made incredible progress in responding to HIV and AIDS in a short time, due in large part to the overwhelming commitment and dedication of the SAG and PEPFAR implementing partners to support the SAG strategy.

The PEPFAR program has, to date, been an emergency response. As we go forward into the next five year re-authorization, the program will continue to strengthen its efforts to control the epidemic. However, there will be a shift in focus to developing program sustainability and health systems strengthening through the HIV programs. As we look towards the next 5 years of USG commitment for HIV and AIDS, a key component of health systems strengthening is the information systems themselves. These are the systems that will provide critical information to key stakeholders, especially the South African Government. The data will enable development of policy

and planning that is data driven as well as evaluations that tell us what we have accomplished and what remains to be done. I hope the next three days' discussion will be useful in achieving this goal and I look forward to our collective success in this endeavor. Given the remarkable dedication and passion that you have all applied to establishing and implementing programs of prevention, care, and treatment of HIV/AIDS, I look to your success in this endeavor as well.

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