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HELLO GORGEOUS

SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

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### *SOCIAL INCLUSION*

This year, 2018, is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) of 1948. It commits the world to global principles. They include, in Article 25 the right “to a standard of living adequate to the health and wellbeing” of all people. Since 2015 the principles in the UDHR have been reinforced by the action program of the *Sustainable Development Goals*. These aspire to access, by 2030, to universal health coverage, with “safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all”. Big dreams!

We all know that the reality often falls short of these dreams. However, the UN has agencies and people working constantly to make these dreams of justice a reality – including UNAIDS, UNDP and WHO.

One of the biggest obstacles to fulfilling such ambitions is social exclusion. This was a lesson we learned in Australia in the earliest days of HIV. Without effective tests, therapies or vaccines we learned to reach out to those most at risk of HIV. And to involve them in the struggle to prevent the spread of HIV and other blood borne diseases. The most vulnerable included gay men (MSM); sex workers (CSW); people who use drugs (PUD); transpeople (TGP); prisoners and refugees. Women’s disempowerment was also a big obstacle.

There were lots of opponents to social inclusion: often self-righteous and, astonishingly, religious people who did not have enough love in their hearts for fellow human beings they have to change!

In the early days the main argument for social inclusion was that it paid dividends by reducing the toll of AIDS, getting people back to work reducing health costs. But such instrumental advocacy is only part of the story. In addition to the benefits for society, social inclusion is also required by universal human rights and the SDGs. These are simply the basic rights of humanity. They must be respected and upheld. Not just to reduce the toll of AIDS but to uphold the individual dignity of all people everywhere. The lesson of the first 30 years of AIDS is to insist on the basic right to health care. That means social inclusion. It pays dividends. But more fundamentally, it is a basic human right.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Kirby', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Michael Kirby  
(Australia)

The Honourable Michael Kirby was a Judge of Australia's highest court (1996-2009). He served on the WHO Global Commission on AIDS (1988-92); UNDP Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2011-12); UNSG's High Level Panel on Access to Healthcare (2015-16) and is Patron of the Kirby Institute, UNSW, Sydney, his partner of 49 years is Johan van Vloten from Dordrecht NL.