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## United Nation: AIDS deaths fall by third in decade

**GENEVA:** Global AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections have fallen by over a third in a decade, the United Nations said yesterday as it voiced hope of wiping out the killer disease.

The global effort to beat the pandemic has made huge strides, though the battle is far from over with 35 million people still living with HIV worldwide, said Michel Sidibe, head of UNAIDS.

"Ending the AIDS epidemic is possible," he said.

"We have a fragile five-year window to build on the rapid results that been made. The next five years will determine the next 15."

In a review of the pandemic released ahead of the 20th International AIDS Conference in Australia from July 20-25, the UN agency said AIDS-related deaths dropped to 1.5 million in 2013 from 1.7 million the previous year.

That was the sharpest annual decline since the peak hit in 2004

and 2005, and marked a 35-percent drop from the 2.4 million deaths seen in both those years.

Alongside the falling death toll, new infections declined to 2.1 million last year, a 38-percent fall compared to the 3.4 million people affected in 2001.

Globally, the report said, 35 million people were living with the virus in 2013, up from 34.6 million the previous year.

Of those, "19 million do not know their HIV-positive status," said Sidibe. — AFP