

OPENING CEREMONY, SUNDAY 11 JULY
SPEAKER BIOS:

Joep Lange

International AIDS Society, Sweden

Dr. Joep Lange has more than 20 years of experience in treating and researching HIV/AIDS. He is President of the International AIDS Society (IAS), organiser of the XV International AIDS Conference, and Professor of Internal Medicine at the University of Amsterdam. He is a member of the Partner Advisory Group for the WHO "3 by 5" Initiative. He also serves as Chairman of the Interim Steering Committee of the International HIV Treatment Access Coalition (ITAC) and Chairman of PharmAccess International, an organisation that aims to remove barriers to anti-AIDS treatment in resource-constrained countries. Previously, he was the Chief of Clinical Research & Drug Development for the World Health Organization's Global Programme on AIDS.

In an opinion piece written for *Science* in June 2004, Dr. Lange and co-author Dr. Vallop Thaineua of the Thai Ministry of Public Health wrote that it is "not too late" to avoid the potential "disaster" of HIV/AIDS spreading rapidly in China, India, Indonesia and other Asian countries. Drs. Lange and Vallop argued that prevention of such a disaster will require the "mobilisation of the necessary forces," including a "global network of relevant institutions and organisations." They also said that to successfully fight HIV/AIDS in Asia, skilled personnel need to be motivated and trained to distribute drugs and medical supplies (*Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report*, June 2004).

Sudarat Keyuraphan

Minister of Public Health, Thailand

Mrs. Sudarat has been the Minister of the Thai Ministry of Public Health and a Member of the House of Representatives since 2001. She has been active in Thai politics since the early 1990's and is among a small number of women who have reached the highest levels of the Thai government.

"Thailand is ready to be the next host," said Mrs. Sudarat of the XV International AIDS Conference. "We have fought the epidemic openly since the beginning" (hdnet.org, July 2002). Although Thailand is already distributing domestically produced antiretrovirals to approximately 70,000 people living with HIV/AIDS through state hospitals, Mrs. Sudarat says that the country plans to increase its drug production in 2005 to treat approximately 200,000 people (*Bangkok Post*, May 2004).

Thaksin Shinawatra

Prime Minister, Thailand

As Thailand's 23rd Prime Minister, Mr. Thaksin Shinawatra has taken a hands-on approach in dealing with issues facing the country. Health issues, including HIV/AIDS, are among those to which the Prime Minister has given special attention. Thailand already has an impressive track

record in preventing HIV/AIDS among certain groups. In recent times, however, Mr. Thaksin has taken new initiatives against the disease, including making antiretroviral drugs available free-of-charge to affected cross-border populations.

By hosting the XV International AIDS Conference, the Thai Government is aiming to further galvanise the fight against HIV/AIDS in the region.

Jennifer Hawkins

Miss Universe 2004, Australia

Ms. Jennifer Hawkins, a native of Sydney, Australia, was named Miss Universe in June 2004. HIV/AIDS awareness is the official cause of the Miss Universe pageant, and as such, during her year-long reign Ms. Hawkins will act as an ambassador for various organisations, including YouthAIDS, the Global Health Council, amfAR, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation and God's Love We Deliver. She plans to use her title to advocate HIV/AIDS prevention, particularly among adolescents, as well as the rights of women and youth to healthcare services and information on family planning.

Kofi Annan

United Nations

Nobel Peace Prize recipient Kofi Annan of Ghana is the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations and the first to be elected from the ranks of United Nations staff. In April 2000, he issued a Millennium Report, entitled "We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century," calling on Member States to commit themselves to a plan of action for several tasks, including reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. In April 2001, the Secretary-General issued a five-point "Call to Action" to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic -- which he described as his "personal priority" -- and proposed the establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria to serve as a mechanism for helping developing countries confront the crisis.

Paisan Suwannawong

Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group, Thailand

Mr. Paisan Suwannawong, a former injecting drug user, has been living with HIV/AIDS for 13 years. He started working with other drug users when he was a resident and then staff at Rebirth Therapeutic Community (for drug treatment). From there, he helped establish Alden House, a community based organisation providing shelter and other services to people living with HIV, including drug users. At the same time, he helped found the Thai Network of PLWHA, which, over five years, launched a campaign focusing on access to AIDS-related treatment, including ARV.

A year after founding the Thai AIDS Treatment Action Group and co-founding the Thai Drug Users' Network, Mr. Suwannawong was part of a successful effort to get a ground-breaking Global Fund (to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria) grant to provide HIV prevention, care and support to injecting drug users in Thailand. Mr. Suwannawong has served on many community based

and UN committees concerning AIDS treatment, and drug use/HIV issues. TTAG focuses on building leadership and advocacy capacity for people living with HIV/AIDS, in particular marginalised groups, and conducts policy advocacy at the national and international levels.