



**AIDS 2006**

*Time to Deliver • Passons aux actes*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **XVI INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE OPENS WITH CALL TO DELIVER ON THE PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HIV PREVENTION, CARE AND TREATMENT**

### **Robust Scientific Programme, Issues of Gender, Poverty and Human Rights to Headline Largest AIDS Conference in History**

**Toronto [13 August 2006]**—With both optimism and resolve, the XVI International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2006) opens today, with scientists, community and political leaders determined to build on recent momentum and close the untenable gap between the numbers of people in need of HIV prevention, care and treatment worldwide and those with access to such interventions.

“Twenty-five years from now, let us look back at AIDS 2006 as a turning point in the epidemic; a moment in history where we saw an opportunity to stem the tide of HIV and chose to act decisively,” said conference Co-Chair Dr. Helene Gayle, President of the International AIDS Society and President and CEO of CARE USA. “Though we face substantial challenges on the road to universal access, momentum is now on our side. We cannot afford to squander this opportunity.”

“The responsibility for ending AIDS belongs to each of us, individually and collectively,” said conference Co-Chair Dr. Mark Wainberg, Chair of the Toronto Local Host Board and Director of the McGill University AIDS Centre. “With the knowledge and tools to prevent and treat HIV in our hands, history will judge us harshly if we fail to deliver.”

#### **Sunday, 13 August Opening Session and Concert**

In a dramatic start to the week-long event, organizers expected an estimated 24,000 participants from more than 170 countries to attend the Opening Session. The session will begin with welcome remarks by Aboriginal, national, provincial and city officials from Canada, followed by plenary remarks from Frika Chia Iskandar, a young woman living with HIV/AIDS from Indonesia, who has actively campaigned against HIV-related stigma. In her remarks, Ms. Chia Iskandar is expected to discuss the importance of GIPA, the principle of Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS Executive Director Dr. Peter Piot will then give a plenary address entitled, “AIDS: The Next 25 Years,” in which he will call for a long-term, sustained response, rather than a crisis management approach to the pandemic.

The Opening Session concludes with a keynote address by Bill and Melinda Gates, Co-Chairs of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Gates are expected to call for an increased focus on women, for accelerated research on microbicides, and for the global scale up of HIV prevention and treatment.

The full Opening Session will be webcast live by [kaisernetwork.org](http://kaisernetwork.org) and is available for viewing during and after the event at [www.aids2006.org](http://www.aids2006.org). The Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC) also will broadcast the session live from 19:00 to 20:30 ET, and in French on RDI. A benefit concert will follow the Opening Session (at Rogers Centre), featuring top-name performers from Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere.

### **Special Sessions to Feature Global Leaders**

On Sunday, a high-level leadership meeting entitled *Time to Deliver for Women and Girls* was expected to include more than 20 ministers of health, education and international cooperation, as well as HRH Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway, representatives of multilateral agencies and the First Lady of Honduras.

Other Special Sessions throughout the week will focus attention on issues of leadership and accountability. On Monday, a morning panel will feature U.S. President Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, who will discuss priorities for ending the pandemic. Later in the day, Melinda Gates will join African jazz artist and activist Musa Njoko, Black Entertainment Television Co-Founder Shelia Johnson, and UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia Sadif Nadik for a panel entitled *Women at the Frontline in the AIDS Response*. That same evening, actor and activist Richard Gere and MTV International's Bill Roedy will kick-off a panel on the role of the media in promoting AIDS education and awareness. A special session on Tuesday will feature a one-on-one conversation with President Clinton, and on Wednesday leaders representing multiple perspectives will reflect on 25 years of AIDS.

### **Robust Scientific Programme Headlines the Conference**

Over 4,500 scientific abstracts, selected from a record number of submissions (over 12,000) will be presented throughout the week. Novel targets for drug development, new prevention technologies (including microbicides, vaccines and pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PREP), the connection between HIV and Tuberculosis, and clinical evidence from early efforts to scale up prevention and treatment in resource-limited countries are among the key scientific findings to be presented. Other abstracts sessions will present results in the areas of social, behavioral and economic research and policy. A particularly strong selection of late breaker abstracts will be presented in Track-specific sessions on Thursday, 16 August.

### **New Focus Areas**

For the first time, the conference will feature designated sessions to facilitate the exchange of information and skills, and spotlight successful efforts to address the following key challenges in the response to HIV/AIDS:

- Accelerate research to end the epidemic;
- Expand and sustain human resources to scale-up prevention and treatment;
- Intensify involvement of affected communities;
- Build new leadership to advance the response; and
- Scaling Up: Lessons from the Field.

The purpose of the sessions is to take full advantage of the opportunity for learning and information exchange for which the conference is known.

An expanded youth programme will offer sessions organized by and for young people that will explore issues of particular importance to this heavily affected population. A new youth website (<http://youth.aids2006.org>) will serve as a portal for youth-related programming during the conference and will feature interactive reports written by youth delegates. An estimated 1,000 youth delegates have registered to attend the conference.

### **Programme Activities**

Introduced at AIDS 2004 (Bangkok), the Global Village is open to delegates and the general public, and will offer a full schedule of activities, discussions and performances each day. A Virtual Village (accessible through <http://globalvillage.aids2006.org>) will provide interactive opportunities for delegates and the entire world to engage through e-forums and discussion boards. Underscoring the relationship between art, culture and HIV, the AIDS 2006 Cultural Activities Programme, *Viral Culture*, will present a dynamic mix of music, theatre, photography and film, as well as exhibits of visual and literary art at venues around Toronto.

### **About the Organizers**

The International AIDS Conference is convened every other year by the International AIDS Society (IAS), the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with 10,000 members from 153 countries. The Toronto Local Host is a not-for-profit organization created specifically to host the Conference, and is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of leaders engaged in the Canadian response to HIV/AIDS. The co-organizers of AIDS 2006 are the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the Global Network of People Living with HIV; the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS; the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations; and the Canadian AIDS Society.

### **Additional Resources**

For additional information, including programme information, abstracts, rapporteur and scientific summaries, and links to webcasts, podcasts, transcripts and presentations from key conference sessions, please visit [www.aids2006.org](http://www.aids2006.org).

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