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WORLD LEADERS JOIN FORCES WITH SCIENCE AND COMMUNITY IN UPCOMING INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE

Participants to Include Former Presidents Mary Robinson and Bill Clinton, HRH Crown Princess Mette-Marit of Norway, Bill and Melinda Gates and Richard Gere

Other Major Speakers Include NIAID Director Anthony Fauci, UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa Stephen Lewis and Bill Roedy of MTV Networks

Toronto [29 June 2006]—Organizers of the XVI International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2006) today announced that the gathering will offer over 400 sessions, meetings and workshops featuring important scientific advances and discussion of current policy issues among political, scientific and community leaders and others on the frontlines of the epidemic. An estimated 20,000 participants are expected to attend the biennial conference, to be held in Toronto, Canada from 13-18 August 2006. The opening programme will feature a keynote address by Bill and Melinda Gates, Co-Chairs of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"We are extremely pleased to have such esteemed partners as we gather in Toronto to discuss the latest research findings and chart a path towards ending the AIDS pandemic," said conference Co-Chair Dr. Helene Gayle, President of the International AIDS Society (IAS) and President and CEO of CARE USA. "The recent UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS underscored just how much work we have ahead."

"The AIDS 2006 programme is designed to harness the knowledge, skills and commitment of thousands of dedicated stakeholders from across the world," said conference Co-Chair Dr. Mark Wainberg, Chair of the Toronto Local Host Board and Director of the McGill University AIDS Centre. "Canada is eager to welcome delegates to Toronto to build support for eliminating disparities in access to HIV prevention, treatment and care throughout the world."

AIDS 2006 to Present Latest Research

Pivotal research will be highlighted in the AIDS 2006 scientific programme. Reports based on abstracts selected from a record number of submissions (nearly 13,000) will shape a particularly strong scientific programme, tracing new trends in basic and clinical research, epidemiology, social science and policy.

Researchers will report fresh findings on the origins of HIV-1, propose how select groups manage to resist infection despite ongoing exposure to the virus, and explain how immunologic variables in infected people may shape the course of resistance to antiretrovirals. Leading medical experts will present new data on the complex intersections between TB and HIV, tackle the critical question of how pregnant women exposed to single-dose nevirapine respond to later antiretroviral therapy, and dissect results of the landmark structured treatment interruption trial, SMART.

On the behavioral front investigators will offer some of the first hard evidence on how wider access to HIV testing and antiretrovirals affects sexual behavior, transmission of HIV, and AIDS stigma.

Other Sessions Explore Community, Leadership and Issues of Accountability

As a follow up to the United Nations' recent Special Session on AIDS, AIDS 2006 will provide an opportunity for delegates to explore how best to monitor progress toward universal access and ensure accountability moving forward. The programme emphasizes evidence-based approaches that have been shown to prevent HIV and proven strategies that offer practical solutions to the enormous challenges of scaling up access to treatment and care.

Empowering women and girls has recently emerged as a major priority for an effective response to the epidemic, and the conference programme will feature a number of sessions addressing this theme. Other session topics include the relationship between HIV, poverty and development, and the importance of sexual and reproductive health rights for women, including commercial sex workers.

The programme will explore issues affecting men who have sex with men, and other vulnerable populations, such as Aboriginal people and injecting drug users. There will also be a focus on the greater involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS. The programme will highlight the importance of new leadership in regions with emerging epidemics and from all sectors, such as faith and business leaders, and the media. Two special sessions will offer a retrospective of the first 25 years of AIDS and AIDS activism, while also exploring the major priorities towards ending the epidemic.

New Focus Areas

Newly designated Key Challenge sessions will facilitate the exchange of information and skills, and spotlight successful efforts to address the following key challenges:

- 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 goal of these sessions is to marshal the collective experience, knowledge and insights of conference delegates toward developing responses to these shared challenges.

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.

Opening Session: Sunday, 13 August, Rogers Centre

The Conference Opening will feature welcome remarks by Aboriginal, national, provincial and city government officials from Canada, as well as plenary addresses by the Frika Chia Iskandar, a young Indonesian woman living with HIV/AIDS and UNAIDS Executive Director Dr. Peter Piot. The opening programme will conclude with a keynote address by Bill and Melinda Gates.

Top HIV/AIDS Experts to Address Delegates

Each morning, the conference will begin with plenary remarks by renowned HIV experts. Monday's panel, which will include the Jonathan Mann Memorial Lecture, will provide an overview of the epidemic today, including updates on HIV pathogenesis, epidemiology, human

rights and the social context in which the epidemic has thrived. On Tuesday, speakers will address the latest research and programmatic developments in the area of HIV prevention.

Wednesday's plenary panel will explore 'state-of-the-art' HIV treatment, including new drugs, HIV treatment for children, and progress towards the goal of universal access to HIV treatment and prevention. Thursday's plenary is a forward-looking panel discussion focusing on such issues as the relationship between AIDS, poverty and development; the role of religion and politics; the importance of youth leadership and the consequences of inaction. A complete list of plenary speakers and topics is available on the conference website at www.aids2006.org.

Other Highlights

- The Cultural Activities Programme, "Viral Culture," will showcase the relationship between AIDS, art and culture. A full schedule of events taking place on-site and throughout Toronto will be available on the AIDS 2006 website in July.
- For the second time, a Global Village will be open to delegates and the general public. Activities in the Global Village will promote learning and interaction between the diverse communities affected and responding to HIV/AIDS.
- A number of awards for scientific research and community leadership will be presented at the conference, including the IAS Young Investigator Award, the ANRS/IAS prize, the IAS/ICW Young Investigator Prize for Research on Women, Girls and HIV/AIDS and the Red Ribbon Award celebrating community leadership and action on AIDS.
- Expanded online programming provided through the AIDS 2006 website and our online partners, kaisernet.org and Clinical Care Options, Inc., will offer free webcasts and other coverage of key conference proceedings.
- The conference will conclude on Friday, 18 August with reports summarizing the major findings from the conference and a keynote address by U.N. Special Envoy Stephen Lewis.

The full conference schedule, including satellite sessions and affiliated events, is now available at www.aids2006.org.

A searchable database of abstracts to be presented at the conference will be available on the AIDS 2006 website as of Saturday, 12 August 2006. **Abstracts are embargoed for release until 08h00 EDT (local time/Toronto) on 12 August 2006.**

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 more than 7,000 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.

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