



OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE – DAY 1

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Tributes paid to lost colleagues aboard flight MH 17 at the Opening Session of the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia

World leaders, researchers, activists and policymakers applaud global progress in the HIV response and urged to address stigma and discrimination

Sunday, 20 July, 2014 (Melbourne, Australia) Tributes were paid tonight at the opening session of the 20th International AIDS Conference to the six delegates who lost their lives aboard flight MH17.

A one minute global moment of remembrance was held in their honour with eleven former, present and future Presidents of the International AIDS Society onstage together with representatives from those organizations who lost colleagues, the World Health Organization, AIDS Fonds, Stop AIDS Now, The Female Health Company, the Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development and members of the Dutch HIV research community

A letter of condolence and support was also read out by Mr Lambert Grijns, The Dutch Ambassador for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and HIV/AIDS.

Condolence books are circulating onsite at the conference for the duration of the event. On Tuesday July 22 at 18.00 AEST, a Candelight Vigil will be held at Federation Square in the centre of Melbourne.

Some 12,000 participants from all over the world have gathered in Melbourne for the start of the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014). Under the theme *Stepping up the Pace*, during the five days of the conference delegates will discuss the latest research developments and will hear about the status of the epidemic from world renowned experts. The conference runs through until Friday, 25 July at the [Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre](#).

AIDS 2014 will offer delegates a strong scientific programme with presentations around hot topics including HIV cure strategies and challenges; HIV prevention via Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), Treatment as Prevention (TasP), and voluntary medical male circumcision; Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C co-infection; and HIV and hormonal contraception. In addition, several studies will discuss the impact of discriminatory laws and the costs related to HIV prevention and care.

At the AIDS 2014 Opening Sessions, speakers discussed the encouraging data related to access treatment and reducing new HIV infections, but reminded the audience that HIV is far from being defeated and that stigma and discrimination towards Key Affected Population pose a major barrier to the end of the epidemic.

"The tremendous scale-up of HIV programmes has, for so many people transformed HIV from a death sentence into a chronically manageable disease," Professor Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, AIDS 2014 International Chair, President of the International AIDS Society (IAS) and Director of the Regulation of Retroviral Infections Unit at the Institut Pasteur in Paris told delegates attending the opening session on Sunday night.

"One-third of people living with HIV, who need treatment now have access to it.

"Nevertheless, these remarkable achievements are still not enough, 22 million people still do not have access to treatment. The official AIDS 2014 theme reminds us that we need to step up the pace and redouble our efforts. Too many countries are still struggling to address their HIV epidemic with their most vulnerable people consistently being left behind".

UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé said that efforts to increase access to antiretroviral therapy are working. In 2013, an additional 2.3 million people gained access to the life-saving medicines. This brings the global number of people accessing ART to nearly 13 million by the end of 2013. Based on recent scale-up, UNAIDS estimates that as of July 2014 as many as 14 million people were accessing ART.

"If we accelerate a scale-up of all HIV services by 2020, we will be on track to end the epidemic by 2030," said Mr Sidibé. "If not, we risk significantly increasing the time it would take, adding a decade, if not more."

"There is so much to admire in Australia's well documented response to HIV. Its bipartisan political approach, its inclusion of key affected communities and the capacity building in science and research have all been major drivers in Australia having one of the lowest rates of HIV infection worldwide," said Professor Sharon Lewin, Local Co- Chair of AIDS 2014, Head of the Department of Infectious Diseases, Alfred Hospital and Monash University and Co-Head of the Centre for Biomedical Research at the Burnet Institute in Melbourne.

"But, as much as the Australian experience has been successful, our neighbours in the Asia Pacific region have not lived the same experience. It is a key objective of the 20th International AIDS Conference to shine a light on those men who have sex with men, sex workers, transgender people and people who use drugs who do not have the same access to treatment, care and prevention as their western colleagues may do."

The [AIDS 2014 Melbourne Declaration](#) was also referred to by the speakers, reaffirming the importance of non-discrimination for an effective response to HIV and, more in general, to public health programmes. The enforcement of discriminatory, stigmatizing, criminalizing and harmful laws leads to policies and practices that increase vulnerability to HIV. These laws, policies, and practices incite extreme violence towards marginalized populations, reinforce stigma and undermine HIV programmes, and as such are significant steps backward for social justice, equality, human rights and access to health care.

World leaders, scientists, philanthropists and Nobel laureates have already endorsed the declaration, as have hundreds of organizations. Individual endorsement can be done online here:

http://www.avaaz.org/en/petition/AIDS_2014_Melbourne_Declaration_Nobody_left_behind/

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Further information:

AIDS 2014 Conference Organization

AIDS 2014 is convened by the IAS and permanent partners the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+); the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO); the International Community of Women with HIV/AIDS (ICW), and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Non-permanent partners are the Positive Women's Network and Sidaction.

The Australian based partners are: the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM); and the National Association of people with HIV Australia (NAPWHA).

The Asia Pacific Partners are: The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW); the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP); and the National AIDS Research of India (NARI).

AIDS 2014 on Social Media

Facebook: www.facebook.com/InternationalAIDSConference

Twitter: [@AIDS_conference](https://twitter.com/AIDS_conference) [#AIDS2014](https://twitter.com/AIDS2014)

LinkedIn: [International AIDS Conference](http://InternationalAIDSConference)

YouTube: www.youtube.com/iasaidsconference

About the IAS

The International AIDS Society (IAS) is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with over 16,000 members from more than 177 countries working at all levels of the global response to AIDS. The IAS members include researchers from all disciplines, clinicians, public health and community practitioners on the frontlines of the epidemic, as well as policy and programme planners.

The IAS is custodian of the biennial International AIDS Conference and lead organizer of the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention, which will be held in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 19-22 July 2015.

www.iasociety.org | www.aids2014.org | www.ias2015.org

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