

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BREAKING RELIGIOUS TABOOS, THE INJUSTICES OF HIV AND TACKLING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION - DAY 4 AT AIDS 2014

BILL CLINTON ADDRESSES THE DELEGATES

Wednesday July 22, 2014 - Former US President Bill Clinton has told delegates at AIDS 2014, the 20th International AIDS Conference, that finding more economically efficient ways to respond to HIV is vital to saving lives and preventing the spread of the virus.

Mr Clinton, who advocates globally for health security through the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), made the comments at the conference in Melbourne today as he reflected on the progress made so far in overcoming the HIV epidemic, as well as the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr Clinton said meeting global HIV prevention and support targets is possible within the “existing funding envelope”, but only if resources are used more effectively. “The development of super-efficient systems can help us achieve the 90 / 90 / 90 goals,” Mr Clinton said, referring to the UNAIDS 2020 targets of 90% of people with HIV knowing their status, 90% of people with HIV receiving antiretroviral treatment and 90% of people on treatment having an undetectable viral load.

Mr Clinton said one of the biggest challenges is delivering care to patients in a better way in rural and remote areas. “How can we reduce the distance they travel to the clinics, the time they wait, the money they spend? How can we launch programs to ensure they feel supported in their communities without the stigma that makes people still, after all these years, drop out of care,” Mr Clinton said.

Mr Clinton said ending mother to child transmission of HIV, and supporting children with HIV is another challenge – as well as a tremendous opportunity for sustaining progress in the response to HIV. “Almost 50% of all new paediatric infections occur during the breastfeeding period. So keeping these women in care until the end of the breast-feeding period is the single most important thing we can do to achieve an AIDS-free generation.”

Mr Clinton indicated that the AIDS 2014 gathering was more of a movement than a conference, and encouraged delegates and those involved with HIV around the world to step up the pace and continue to make in-roads in the global response to HIV. He also paid his respects to the victims of MH17 including the six delegates due to attend AIDS 2014. He said the delegates who died, through their work for the global HIV response “gave their entire lives to the proposition that our common humanity matters a hell of a lot more than our differences.”

Today’s conference activities (Wednesday 23 July) began with plenary presentations about improving outcomes for marginalised populations of people affected by HIV. The theme of the conference today, including the opening plenary session, was “Nobody left behind”. Issues discussed included addressing the needs of people who use drugs through drug policy and harm reduction (Khuat T. M. Oanh of Vietnam), increasing support for people living with HIV and tuberculosis co-infection (Diane Havlir of the US), and reducing the impact of HIV on sex workers (Daisy Nakato of Uganda) and on indigenous populations (James Ward of Australia).

Also this morning was a symposium on how momentous political and cultural change in South East Asia is impacting on the HIV response in the region and the lessons learned from countries which are moving through periods of major transition. Other sessions included a discussion of how police forces can better support HIV prevention efforts, and how organisations from around the world are helping to reduce barriers to HIV prevention and care for transgender people.

This afternoon featured a symposium on how religious faiths can work to overcome sexual taboos that have negatively contributed to the HIV epidemic. Other sessions this afternoon explored a range of subjects such as: responding to the HIV prevention and support needs of migrants, refugees and mobile populations; maximising the preventive benefits of HIV treatments; and novel ways to increase HIV testing among at-risk populations.

One of the most moving sessions of the conference took place late in the afternoon when a panel of people living with HIV discuss how they have directly and personally been affected by injustice, control and punishment based on their HIV status. Their stories will deal with issues such as HIV criminalisation, reproductive rights, employment and migration as well as stigma and discrimination. Mr Clinton commented in the opening address that it is “unbelievable” that after all this time, “stigma and discrimination are on the rise in some contexts.”

The Global Village, the conference’s international showcase of community related HIV programmes and activities, featured a range of events including HIV-related fashion shows, film screenings, music recitals and dance performances, as well as discussions on a variety of issues such as: understanding travel restrictions for migrants living with HIV/migrants and travellers; empowering sex workers in Asia and the Pacific, and innovative approaches to engaging young people through social media and digital platforms.

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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 #AIDS2014

LinkedIn: International AIDS Conference

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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Caption: President Clinton meeting with Owen Ryan, Executive Director of the IAS, Sharon Lewin, Local Co-chair of AIDS 2014, Chris Beyrer, President-elect of the IAS and Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, AIDS 2014 International Chair and President of the IAS (From left to right).

