



OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE: DAY 3

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE  
11:00 (CET), TUESDAY, 20 JULY 2010

## Human Rights Protections Essential in Drive for Universal Access

### Release of Important New Research that Could Empower Women to Lower Risk of HIV Infection Highlights the Intersection of Science and Human Rights

**20 July 2010 [Vienna, Austria]**—The call for human rights as a fundamental component of efforts to prevent new infections and provide treatment for people living with HIV pervaded the XVIII International AIDS Conference today as delegates and local residents prepared for the HIV and Human Rights March through the streets of Vienna this evening. Conference participants are giving voice to the conference theme of *Rights Here, Right Now* through a number of plenary presentations, sessions, and Global Village and Youth Programme activities.

The examination of the rights of women in the context of HIV took on a powerful new dimension with the release Monday evening of the CAPRISA 004 microbicide trial results. The study provides the first data demonstrating the effectiveness of an antiretroviral-based vaginal microbicide in reducing a woman's risk of sexually transmitted infection with HIV and genital herpes. The trial tested the safety and effectiveness of a 1% tenofovir gel among nearly 900 women at two sites in South Africa. As today's plenary speaker Everjoice Win noted, women have a greater likelihood of being on the receiving end of violent or coercive sexual intercourse and these results are a significant step toward a tool that puts the power of HIV prevention in women's hands. The CAPRISA trial results will be presented at 13:00 in Session Room 7.

"We welcome news of progress on a prevention tool that would give women greater control over their health and their lives," said Dr. Julio Montaner, AIDS 2010 Chair, President of the International AIDS Society (IAS) and Director of the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS in Vancouver, Canada. "Empowering women in this way as part of a broader agenda to ensure human rights brings us one step closer to the goal of universal access."

Among the many human rights-focused activities at AIDS 2010 are a Youth Programme agenda dedicated to human rights, harm reduction and health resources, and Global Village Networking Zones dedicated to accessibility, human rights, harm reduction, people living with HIV, sex workers, women, the LGBT community, men who have sex with men, and the black diaspora.

"We are reminded today of the strong link between scientific advancement and human rights protections," said Dr. Brigitte Schmied, AIDS 2010 Local Co-Chair and President of the Austrian AIDS Society. "Science is now poised to give us another important new tool to help women protect themselves from HIV and save lives."

### **New Concepts in HIV/AIDS Pathogenesis: Implications for Interventions**

In his plenary remarks, Dr. Anthony Fauci (United States) of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases focused on the early and complex pathogenic events that occur within the first hours to days of sexual exposure to HIV. These early events, which include the spread of virus to lymphoid tissue and the establishment of viral reservoirs, determine the subsequent course of HIV infection and represent a period of vulnerability for the virus that provides a window of opportunity for intervention. Fauci discussed how growing understanding of these events is informing the development of HIV vaccines, other new prevention interventions, early treatment of HIV infection and potentially a cure in certain individuals.

Among other topics, Fauci discussed recent data from his laboratory on the role of a receptor for the HIV envelope on the surface of CD4+ T cells called  $\alpha 4\beta 7$  that, in certain forms, defines a subset of CD4+ T cells that are highly susceptible to productive HIV infection.  $\alpha 4\beta 7$  is a cellular protein that guides immune system cells to the gut. In HIV infection, the gut is rapidly depleted of CD4+ T cells, the main target of HIV, triggering the process that ultimately leads to AIDS. Fauci suggests that an HIV envelope conformation that allows initial binding to  $\alpha 4\beta 7$  on mucosal CD4+ T cells should be seriously considered as a target for HIV vaccine development.

### **Violence Against Women and Girls**

Everjoice Win (Zimbabwe) of ActionAid International described the magnitude of violence perpetrated against women and girls around the world and drew the strong links between this violence and HIV. She noted that both are rooted in gender inequality and described the violence as both a cause and a consequence of HIV. She cited as examples the greater likelihood of a woman being on the receiving end of violent or coercive sexual intercourse and of an HIV-positive woman being the target of domestic violence from partners or family members who blame or stigmatize them.

The international community has recognized violence against women as a violation of human rights and human rights treaties establish the responsibility of states for preventing violations, punishing perpetrators and ending impunity. Win declared that states should not use culture, religion, or tradition as excuses for not addressing violations of women's human rights. In outlining strategies for action, Win called for the recognition and prioritization of violence against women in the AIDS response, and vice versa. She urged donors to address the intersection between HIV and violence and called for the investment in more research to build an evidence base on how they are a cause and consequence of each other. She also urged stronger and well-enforced anti-violence laws that take HIV into account.

### **Universal Access: Treatment and Prevention Scale Up**

South African Minister of Health Aaron Motsoaledi discussed efforts to achieve universal access to HIV treatment and prevention on the eve of the deadline world leaders first set in 2005. A medical practitioner by training, Dr. Motsoaledi has a long history of public service focusing on strategies to address poverty, unemployment and access to services. South Africa continues to be the country most heavily affected by HIV and has experienced a dramatic revitalization of its response to the epidemic in the past year.

### **Human Rights March, Rally and Live Performance by Annie Lennox**

Beginning at 18:30, conference delegates and the public are invited to congregate at Schottentor. The march, which is part of the Human Rights and HIV/AIDS: Now More Than Ever campaign, will begin at 20:00 and end at Heldenplatz, where a rally with government leaders, advocates and people affected by HIV will be held. Singer/songwriter/activist and UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador Annie Lennox will give a live performance and a special presentation of her SING Campaign. For more information, visit [www.HIVHumanRightsNow.org](http://www.HIVHumanRightsNow.org).

Visit [www.aids2010.org](http://www.aids2010.org) for complete programme information and comprehensive online coverage, as well as a link to the [Vienna Declaration](#), the official declaration of the XVIII International AIDS Conference, which calls for a reorientation of international drug policy.

### **About the AIDS 2010 Organizers**

AIDS 2010 is convened by the IAS, the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, in partnership with a number of international, regional and local partners. International partners for AIDS 2010 include:

- Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), including its co-sponsors, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO)
- Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+)/International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW)
- World YWCA
- Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC)

Local and regional partners for AIDS 2010 include local scientific leadership and:

- City of Vienna
- Government of Austria
- Aids Hilfe Wien
- Austrian AIDS Society
- East European & Central Asian Union of PLWH (ECUO)
- European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS)
- European Commission

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