

PRESS RELEASE

Archbishop Tutu passes baton to a new generation of leaders in the AIDS response

Commitments made to transform the response to HIV at historic event on Robben Island

Robben Island/Geneva, 3 May 2011—Archbishop Desmond Tutu has symbolically passed the baton to a new generation of young leaders focused on AIDS. The handover took place during an event held to inspire a transformation of the AIDS response which was convened by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on Robben Island in South Africa.

The event joined together world renowned leaders from the UNAIDS High Level Commission on HIV Prevention with a group of young leaders who, in turn, presented the commissioners with a ‘call to action’ articulating the vision of the youth movement on HIV. The Commission on HIV Prevention was established by UNAIDS in 2010 to influence and lead social and political action aimed at galvanizing support for effective HIV prevention programmes.

“Today is about putting our heads and our hearts together to support a renewal of leadership and commitment in HIV prevention,” said Archbishop Tutu, co-chair of the Commission on HIV and long-standing AIDS advocate. “Bold and honest actions are needed and we look to the next generation of leaders to bring about positive change in attitudes and actions.”

The youth representatives convened recently in Mali at a youth leader’s summit on HIV where young people from across the world worked to find innovative ways of strengthening the links between youth and AIDS movements, notably through new media channels.

“Young people have the power to change the future and transform the AIDS response,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “A collective youth movement mobilised around HIV prevention which exchanges important information through new technologies and peer education will stop new infections.”

Archbishop Tutu called on the young participants to commit to taking forward a new generation of leadership in the AIDS response. He also called on the HIV Prevention Commission members to inspire and mentor them in their leadership role.

Commitments were also made by the Commissioners who pledged to take the transformation of the AIDS response forward in their respective sectors. Commissioner Earvin “Magic” Johnson announced by video message that his Foundation will establish a global AIDS fellowship programme for young people. Elena Pinchuk’s AntiAIDS Foundation announced a global competition for young innovators to develop social networking campaigns. Former President of Germany’s Parliament Rita Süssmuth and former Barbados Foreign Affairs Minister announced they will establish a circle of former ministers who will use their influence to push the HIV prevention cause.

The event was held on Robben Island off the cost of Cape Town in South Africa where former president Nelson Mandela was incarcerated. The location is seen as a testimony to the human spirit, symbolising the power of change.

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UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.