

Press release

UNAIDS commends Parliamentarians for bold leadership in their response to HIV

Manila, 30 November 2007 – On the eve of World AIDS Day recognizing the theme of leadership, Parliamentarians from around the world have adopted bold recommendations to guide their response to HIV at the national level. They recognized that in spite of revised estimates, the scale of the epidemic remains a major challenge, with Africa and Asia bearing the biggest burden of the epidemic. At the close of the First Global Parliamentary Meeting on HIV/AIDS organized by the Inter Parliamentary Union and hosted by the Senate of the Philippines, Parliamentarians demonstrated an unprecedented commitment, by taking up tough issues which are imperative to achieving the goal of coming as close as possible to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment care and support by 2010.

“Saving a life is the highest ethical act one can ever do for mankind,” said Ugandan MP Elioda Tumweseigye, Chair of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS. “Parliamentarians, once empowered with the right information and the necessary resources, can help save thousands and thousands of lives.”

The conclusions, adopted by the nearly 200 parliamentarians from countries of all regions, agreed to undertake bold steps to increase leadership, particularly with regards to access to essential medicines, the fight against stigma and discrimination, reducing the vulnerability of populations most at risk, “making the money work” for HIV in countries, and avoiding the use of criminal law in favour of increasing access to comprehensive and evidence-informed HIV prevention methods.

“This meeting is the first time ever that Parliamentary representatives from all over the world have come together to discuss the challenges of HIV, and to look for ways to strengthen joint and individual efforts to reverse this epidemic, and the human rights violations that underpin it - inequality, discrimination, poverty and under-development.” said Michel Sidibe, Deputy Executive Director of Programmes, UNAIDS.

Earlier in the meeting, a comprehensive handbook entitled “Taking Action Against HIV” was launched, further outlining how parliamentarians can use their unique power and authority to increase the response to HIV. This handbook will serve as a crucial tool for parliamentarians as well as other partners in the HIV response worldwide.

Contact

Sophie Barton-Knott | UNAIDS Geneva | +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

Ced Apilado | UNAIDS Philippines | +63 2 901 0412 | ced.apilado@undp.org

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programmes on AIDS. UNAIDS’ Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org