

Paris AIDS Conference Opens

IAS Conference Opens with Calls for Treatment for All with AIDS  
Economist, President : 'We need more Brazils'

PARIS – **The 2<sup>nd</sup> IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis and Treatment**, the most important scientific AIDS conference this year, opens today with three calls to treat every person who needs treatment—from a national leader, an activist and an economist. The goal of the conference is to share the latest advances in HIV research and provide a platform for the international community to translate the science into action.

The International AIDS Society conference takes place in Paris, July 13-16 and is hosted by ANRS, the French national AIDS research agency. In addition to presentation of the latest advances in HIV science and AIDS treatment, the conference focuses on expanding treatment in resource-poor environments, particularly sub-Saharan Africa. More than 5,000 delegates are attending the conference to hear the latest results in both basic and clinical science, including a record number of scholarships to researchers from the developing world.

In the opening session, former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso of Brazil discussed his country's success in providing antiretroviral treatment for all; activist Marie-Josée Mbuzenakamwe called for treatment for Africa; and economist Jean-Paul Moatti presented a new paradigm, an economic rationale for providing treatment in the developing world. The conference was opened by Mayor Bertrand Delanoë of Paris, and by conference co-chairmen Joep Lange, president of the International AIDS Society, and Michel Kazatchkine, director of ANRS.

"All people living with AIDS can be treated, no matter the level of resources in their country. At the IAS conference we'll discuss exactly how to do that, particularly in Africa. Our researchers and clinicians will hear from President Cardoso about the Brazilian model, and the lesson is clear: We need a world of Brazils, of countries where national commitment and added resources lead to universal treatment. And tomorrow, Nelson Mandela will help us make it very clear: It is past time for the politicians to make the resources available, to treat ALL the people," Lange said.

"Brazil, beginning under President Cardoso, has shown that universal treatment is possible in any country. But the fact that Brazil accounts for one-third of the people in the global South receiving anti-retroviral therapy shows there are still many political, sociocultural and economic obstacles to treatment," said Kazatchkine, who also chairs the Technical Review Panel of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. "We need a new type of research, which will draw lessons from actions promoting access to treatment and prevention in real time. And we need to take successful treatments to the people who need them – 95% in the developing world. It is no accident that this conference is held at the same time as the conference to support the Global Fund."

Moatti, a professor at the University of the Mediterranean and editor of "Economics of AIDS," a collection released this week by ANRS, called for broader access to treatment based on cost-effectiveness.

"Access to treatment in the countries of the global South is not only a moral imperative, it's a rational economic choice," Moatti said. "Between 1997 and 2001, access to treatment in Brazil by 125,000 patients saved more than \$2 billion. And between 1996 and 2002, more than 60,000 new cases of AIDS were prevented, as well as 90,000 deaths and 358,000 hospital admissions.," Moatti said. "We already have enough evidence to show that the cost-effective argument should not be used anymore to legitimate debate in scaling up access to drugs."

Mbuzenakamwe, spoke from her experience coordinating HIV/AIDS care for the group ANSS in Bujumbura, Burundi. "We are doing what we can in Burundi but what we can do is limited by the resources available. Only 1,000 patients in total have access to antiretroviral drugs, of at least 90,000 people who need them. At these conferences we hear one reality in the speeches of leaders of rich countries. In Burundi we realize the nature of the commitment rich countries and their leaders are making, which is very different from what they describe in speeches," Mbuzenakamwe said.

The conference will feature 6 plenary sessions, 180 oral presentations, 900 poster presentations, and more than a dozen symposia. Other conference highlights include Monday's special plenary at which former President

Nelson Mandela of South Africa will give his perspective on the obligation to provide treatment for all. Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease of the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services will present a summary of the accomplishments of "Twenty Years of HIV Science."

And on Wednesday night, the closing ceremony will include President Jacques Chirac of France, Romano Prodi, the president of the European Commission, and Richard Feachem, director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The conference is held in scientific collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control as well as the National Institutes of Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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