



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International AIDS Society and AIDS 2014 partners launch the preparation process for the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014) in Melbourne, Australia

October 18 (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia) - The International AIDS Society and the partners* of AIDS 2014 met for the first time in Melbourne to commence the planning of the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014), to be held in Melbourne, Australia from 20 to 25 July 2014 at the Melbourne Convention Centre.

AIDS 2014 is expected to convene more than 14,000 delegates from nearly 200 countries, including more than 1,200 journalists. As the largest gathering of professionals working in the field of HIV, including people living with HIV and other leaders in the HIV response, the biennial International AIDS Conference plays a fundamental role in shaping the global response to HIV and in keeping HIV and AIDS on the international political agenda.

Nobel Prize winner, for discovering the HIV virus, Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, International Chair of AIDS 2014 welcomed the committee to the Melbourne Convention Centre outlining the important task in front of them:

'Bringing the conference to Australia gives us a great opportunity to have an international conference with an Asian Pacific focus. The region has both challenges and successes in its response to the HIV epidemic. The conference acts as a spot light purposely highlighting the challenges to find ways to turn these into successes. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Conference Coordinating Committee to make AIDS 2014 dynamic and thought provoking with both its scientific and community programme' said Barré Sinoussi.

In addition to the formal meetings a reception for the committee was held by the Hon David Davis MP Minister for Health, which gave all parties involved in this collaboration a chance to meet and discuss future plans. The Minister gave a short speech highlighting the importance of the conference coming to Melbourne, remarking that:

'We are at a critical moment in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The world has made incredible progress in its efforts to understand, prevent and treat this disease, and progress has been particularly rapid during the last ten years. The Treatment as Prevention revolution represents a paradigm shift in how the prevention response is being explored and developed. It is essential that our new initiatives are monitored and reported.'

The UN Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS issued in 2011 has outlined transmission reduction targets to be achieved by 2015. AIDS 2014 will be a chance for Australia and the world to report on progress against these targets.

As the host city of AIDS 2014 we look forward to a collaborative, global dialogue on the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, in the context of achieving - within our lifetimes - the first AIDS free generation'.

At the reception, the Local Co-chair of the conference, Sharon Lewin, Director of the Infectious Diseases Unit, Alfred Hospital, Professor of Medicine, Monash University, also outlined her hopes for the conference and thanked all the local entities that have made it possible to have AIDS 2014 in Melbourne, Australia:

'This is a very exciting time in the HIV epidemic. A time full of optimism and hope....but there are many challenges ahead. We have access to fabulous advances in treatment and prevention but now face great challenges in implementing what we know works. We must still fight stigma and discrimination which we know remains prevalent in far too many countries. As a scientist and clinician, I remain passionate about what science has done and what it still can and must do. As much as ever, we need a cure. We need a vaccine. I very much hope we will see significant advances in all these areas by AIDS 2014.'

I would like to thank the federal government of Australia, state government of Victoria, the Melbourne Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the City of Melbourne for their financial commitment to supporting AIDS 2014 in Melbourne. We could never have brought the meeting to Melbourne without you' said Lewin.

Those attending the committee meeting included the co-chairs for conference programme who are responsible for ensuring the programme meets the highest standard in three key areas: Science, Leadership and Accountability, and Community.

Scientific Programme Committee Co-chairs: Gita Ramjee, South Africa; Marian Pitts, Australia; Joel Gallant, United States. **Leadership and Accountability Programme Committee Co-chairs:** Louise Binder, Canada; Annmarree O'Keefe, Australia; Elis Khartina Widen, Indonesia. **Community Programme Committee Co-chairs:** Yolanda Simon, Trinidad; Brent Allen, Australia; Khartini Slamah, Malaysia.

*AIDS 2014 is convened by 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 United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS.)
Non-permanent members are the Positive Women's Network and Sidaction.

The Australian based partners are: AusAID, the Australasian Society for HIV medicine (ASHM) and the National Association of people living with HIV (NAPWA).

The Asia Pacific Partners are: The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), the National AIDS Research of India (NARI) and the AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific (ASAP).

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 196 countries working at all levels of the global response to AIDS. Our 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 the 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 Kuala Lumpur in July 2013. www.iasociety.org | www.ias2013.org | www.aids2014.org

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