

## **International AIDS Society - Industry Liaison Forum celebrates ten years of accelerating scientifically promising, ethical HIV research in resource-limited countries**

**Rome, 15 July 2011** – The International AIDS Society (IAS) - Industry Liaison Forum (ILF) celebrates its ten year anniversary, adding another important milestone to this already historic year in the global response to HIV/AIDS. This year marks 30 years since the first reported AIDS cases, ten years since the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was adopted, and ten years since the ILF was founded to establish a partnership forum that would mobilize stakeholders to address the complex and inter-related research issues on HIV/AIDS. During this past decade of activity, the ILF has made a significant contribution to the fight against HIV/AIDS by overcoming challenges related to ethical research standards and by convening industry, investigators and policy planners engaged with research in the developing world.

In 2001, the ILF was founded by Joep Lange, President of the IAS in a time when investigators, physicians and industry representatives identified a shared need for dialogue and cooperation to overcome a number of confounding issues that limited the potential of research success in resource-poor countries. These included ethical considerations related to the design and execution of trials and post-trial care, research structures and needs from Phase I to Phase IV studies and the role and bioequivalence of generic drugs.

“In 2001, the need for a partnership forum that could help to strengthen scientifically promising, ethical, evidence-based HIV research in low and middle-income countries became apparent,” said Joep Lange, IAS-ILF founder and former IAS President. “The ILF was therefore established, with the ultimate goal of increasing access to prevention and treatment for underserved populations in resource-limited settings, at the same time as acknowledging the role and the responsibility of pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies in ethical HIV research.”

Much of the ILF’s early work was influenced by controversies around ethical issues related to clinical research on HIV prevention and treatment being undertaken in some countries and to the fact that advances in HIV research were not reaching the majority of people living in resource-limited settings. In 2003, the ILF published a Post-trial Care Consensus Framework that defined ethical standards for clinical research and provided guidance to investigators and key stakeholder.

Since 2004, the ILF has addressed ethical, operational and scientific issues related to PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) research. This commitment to PrEP was affirmed in the ILF strategic plan for 2006-2008, which focused on the urgent need for biomedical prevention technologies to reinforce existing prevention approaches in countries with limited resources. Another area of concern reflected challenges not unique to PrEP, but shared across other areas of clinical investigation including the involvement of people living with HIV in study design and conduct, along with models for animal and human research.

Over the past three years, the ILF has continued to keep a watchful eye over the PrEP research agenda, but focused predominantly on promoting HIV research in women and children. Through a 10-month consultative process involving investigators, clinicians, civil society, industry, and UN agencies, the ILF and its international partners carried out an environmental scan to identify knowledge gaps related to

treatment needs of women and children ([“Environmental Scan: Mapping HIV Research Priorities for Women and Children”](#)). The consultation resulted in a [Consensus Statement](#) In 2010, the ILF published the [Consensus Statement](#), outlining 20 priority research questions providing direction and expert advice on clinical and operational research to meet women’s and children’s needs. The consensus statement was endorsed by IAS and 15 international partners including WHO, UNAIDS and UNICEF, alongside pharmaceutical industry, civil society and community organisations. To this end, the range of the current ILF’s activities is designed to bring together experts from the HIV/AIDS field and deepen the understanding on the complexity of PMTCT (Preventing Mother To Child Transmission), infant diagnostics, paediatric treatment, access, and care.

The UN High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in New York last month placed special emphasis on the elimination of paediatric HIV and the health of mothers, reiterating the importance of these issues and the foresight of the ILF’s focus on women and children. The ILF as a unique multi-stakeholder forum that recognises industry as partner in the fight against HIV/AIDS is in an advantageous position to accelerate research in this field. “As the HIV pandemic continues to exact an increasing toll on women and children, the IAS - ILF is vital to advancing a research agenda which specifically addresses HIV in women and children,” said Elly Katabira, IAS President. “Inadequate responses to HIV are a major barrier to women’s health and progress worldwide, and the ILF strives to overcome this by advocating on key gaps to be filled in clinical and programmatic knowledge that hinder access to effective HIV prevention, treatment and care for women and children.”

The ILF will convene in Rome from 17 - 20 July for the 6<sup>th</sup> IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention ([www.ias2011.org](http://www.ias2011.org)) and will host a series of satellite sessions on PMTCT scale-up, paediatric antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and ARV-based prevention with the objective of bringing diverse stakeholders together. These sessions will provide an opportunity for dialogue on how through a collaborative and inclusive framework some of the challenges for universal access to prevention, treatment, and care for women and children can be overcome.

The strategic mission of the ILF in the coming years is to continue to play a convening role and to engage stakeholders. This unique multi-stakeholder platform will allow the ILF to promote creative thinking and constructive dialogue, with an overarching objective to advance HIV research in resource-limited setting.

### **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 Rome, Italy in July 2011.

[www.iasociety.org](http://www.iasociety.org) | [www.ias2011.org](http://www.ias2011.org)

### **About the ILF**

The work of the ILF is supported and guided by the Advisory Group. This group is composed of representatives from major pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, which are involved in HIV-related activities, as well as UN agencies, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and academic research experts. The role of Advisory Group members is to advise the ILF Secretariat at the IAS on the planning and implementation of the ILF mission, as outlined in the strategic plan.

[www.iasociety.org/ilf.aspx](http://www.iasociety.org/ilf.aspx)

**Further information:**

In Rome:

**Onsite Media Information Desk: +39 0680241 756\***

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<b>Name</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Mobile</b>
International media:		
<b>Lindsey Rodger</b> <b>Michael Kessler</b>	 lindsey.rodger@iasociety.org mkessler@ya.com	  +39 348 686 8417