

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

IAS Investigates Washington D.C. as Host of 2012 International AIDS Conference

Washington D.C. could be the host city of the world's largest conference in the field of health and development if the United States drops its ban on the entry of HIV-positive people.

11 June 2009 (Geneva, Switzerland) – The International AIDS Society (IAS) today announced its interest in convening the International AIDS Conference in 2012 (AIDS 2012) in Washington, D.C.. The final decision would depend on whether the United States drops its 22-year old ban on the entry of foreigners living with HIV into the country.

“In recent years, the United States government’s leadership on HIV/AIDS has been unparalleled on the global stage,” said IAS President, Dr Julio Montaner. “This long-standing law, which is contrary to all scientific evidence and human rights principles, is one of the U.S.’s weakest spots in HIV policy,” continued Dr Montaner.

“The IAS’s opposition to the ban is rooted in its history as the convener of the International AIDS Conference. A fundamental principle of the IAS is that people living with HIV should be able to participate fully and without restrictions at HIV conferences. Hence, the conference has not been held in the U.S. since 1990 because of the ban on entry of people living with HIV,” explained Dr Montaner.

Following the announcement in July 2008 that the U.S. government restrictions would be repealed, the Governing Council of the IAS expressed its intention to hold AIDS 2012 in Washington, D.C.

“Holding this conference in Washington, D.C. would be an opportunity to highlight the longstanding U.S. global leadership in HIV research, prevention, care and treatment, along with the ongoing domestic and international challenges to ending the epidemic. AIDS 2012 will bring together an estimated 30,000 participants from around the world to address one of the most critical health and development challenges of our generation, highlight the latest results of HIV-related research and foster new streams of collaboration to this global effort.”

“Twenty-five years after the discovery of HIV, the world is finally making progress on rolling back the terrible toll of the global AIDS pandemic. It is time for the U. S. to end the discriminatory ban on entry of foreigners living with HIV,” said Dr Montaner.

The U.S. is among only nine countries in the world that still ban foreigners from visiting and migrating specifically on the basis of an HIV-positive status. The others are: Brunei, China, Oman, Qatar, South Korea, Sudan, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Despite Congressional repeal in July 2008 of the U.S. law, or “HIV entry ban” as it is commonly referred to, the actual regulatory policy that puts the ban into practice is caught up in government bureaucracy and remains in force.

IAS Executive Director, Craig McClure explained that scientific evidence shows travel restrictions against HIV-positive people are ineffective prevention tools.

“These laws are not consistent with current scientific knowledge, public health best practice, and humanitarian principles. Discriminatory laws and policies like this continue to fuel national and international stigma and do not protect public health. These laws sustain a culture of exclusion, rights violations and marginalization that impedes an effective response to the epidemic,” said Mr McClure.

The IAS is the world’s leading independent association of HIV professionals, with over 13,000 members in 188 countries working at all levels of the global response to HIV/AIDS. IAS members represent scientists, clinicians, public health, policy experts and community practitioners on the frontlines of the epidemic. The IAS is the lead organizer of the International AIDS Conference and the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

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NOTE TO JOURNALISTS:

More information on the travel restrictions imposed by the United States and other countries against people living with HIV may be found at these links:

http://www.iasociety.org/Web/WebContent/File/ias_policy%20paper.pdf (IAS Policy paper on travel restrictions)

<http://www.hivtravel.org> (website detailing all countries’ restrictions, if any, against travel by people living with HIV)