

The report of the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) to the Commonwealth Heads of Government: “Time for Urgent Reform”.

In October 2011, the Commonwealth adopted the recommendations of the Eminent Persons Group<sup>1</sup> (EPG) to tackle some of the most critical problems occurring in its 54 nations. The EPG role consisted in “examining the options for reform that would bring the Commonwealth’s institutions into stronger and more effective framework of co-operation and partnerships.” As pointed out in the report, there is an emergency in facing the challenge posed by HIV.

According to UNDP, the state of the epidemic in the Commonwealth requests urgent reforms. Commonwealth is home of 30% of global population and 60% of people living with HIV reside in this region. Particular efforts are required to encounter this tragic condition, especially as current financial constraints limit actions and fund availability. Like any other such broad groups, there are some glaring disparities, with a high burden in the sub-Saharan region, but the EPG calls upon the 54 Nations to engage in severe structural reforms in the legal, social and political spheres to reverse the cure of epidemic at the regional level.

To do so, great attention is drawn to “the rule of laws and human rights” given the explicit relation that tie in the human rights framework and the HIV and AIDS response. As noted by the EPG, “advancing the culture of democracy” and strengthening the civil society organisations are a key component of the solution.

A total of five recommendations have been made by the EPG.

- ✓ Mobilize of all key ministers including law, health, Women affairs and Youth to ensure that HIV is on all national agendas of Commonwealth Nations and adequate programs are implemented
- ✓ Pursue common efforts along with UN agencies, pharmaceutical industry and philanthropic organizations inside and outside the Commonwealth to effectively response to HIV
- ✓ Advocate for the review of Global Fund criteria with regards to recipient countries definition
- ✓ Modify legislations in place to repeal discriminatory laws
- ✓ Defend flexibilities rights granted in the Doha declaration

IAS calls upon the Commonwealth leaders to respect their engagements and to deal with stigma that everyday worsens the life of people living with HIV and those at higher risk of HIV.

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