

## GENERAL SECTION

# THE XVI INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE: TIME TO DELIVER

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International AIDS Society (IAS), AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host with the collaboration of co-organizers, organized XVI International AIDS Conference during August 2006 at Toronto, Canada. Over twenty six thousand participants from different walks of life from more than 170 countries attended biennial gathering of the global AIDS community. More than 4,500 scientific abstract, were presented in 400 sessions. The conference authorities extended subsidized registration fee to participants of less developed countries, and gave access to online dissemination of conference proceedings to those who could not attend the event. Youth and Cultural Activities, People living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) lounge within Global Village provided opportunities to communities of most-affected regions around the globe to discuss and raise their voice on forthcoming challenges.

Twenty-five years have elapsed after the first reported case of AIDS, there is ever increase in magnitude of epidemic with each passing year. This present nature of epidemic demands accountability from all stakeholders to fulfill the needs of their commitments, may it be financial, programmatic or political. The AIDS 2006 Conference's theme: *Time to Deliver* stresses the urgency in bringing effective HIV preventive and treatment strategies for the communities around the globe. Conference served as venue to share lessons learned about the epidemic, highlight recent advances, and to revisit earlier commitments.

Among many major attractions were exchange of information regarding development of

microbicides-next-generation drugs, vaccines and protective nature of male circumcision. Microbicides-are gel or creams used to block the virus which can be applied vaginally before sex, represents a great hope on the horizon on which Gates Foundation is investigating. One of the gaps identified in effective delivery of HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention program in developing countries is critical shortage of nurses. An emerging theme of 16<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference was to empower the women in order to halt the spread of HIV. Younger women between the ages of 15-35 are three times more likely to be infected with AIDS virus and make up half of all the cases around the globe.

The former president Bill Clinton and Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft Corporation and Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation remained at the nucleus of attraction. Bill Clinton predicted the rocky road until the discovery of vaccine and stressed the investment in HIV/AIDS research. Where as Bill Gates promised to continue funds for the research of microbicides, HIV/AIDS vaccine and for anti-retroviral medication. Both charismatic personalities ensured their commitment and continued support by using star power to battle against global pandemic.

The week long event ended among roars of AIDS activists showing concern over Canadian premier for not attending the conference and with the determination to fulfill the commitments made at the forum. Pakistani contingent comprising of public and private sector researchers presented their work in AIDS 2006 as well.

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