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PAHO participates in Several Activities in Toronto

PAHO will participate at the XVI International AIDS Conference through several activities. Here are the highlights:

- **Launch** of the *Towards Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment: 3 by 5 Report for the Americas*, Monday to Friday, August 14 to 18, UNAIDS booth 402, WHO section (copies of the report will be available at all times)
- **Workshop** TB/HIV Co-Infection, Saturday August 12, 9:00 am until 1:00 pm, Metro Hall
- **Panel:** 3 by 5 Initiative, Lessons learned from Latin America and the Caribbean towards Universal Access, Monday August, 14, 4:15 pm to 5:45 pm, Global Village-Session Hall 2
- **CAREC/PAHO Luncheon:** Universal Access – The need for a strong health sector response in the Caribbean (by invitation), Tuesday August 15 11:45 am to 2:00 pm, Toronto Hilton Hotel
- **Abstract** TUPE0204: Scale-up of HIV care, treatment and support in the Caribbean is feasible: Success and challenges, Tuesday, August 15
- **Abstract** TUPE0592: Integrating PMTCT services in resource poor settings: experience from Haiti, Tuesday, August 15
- **Breakfast** with representatives of civil society of Latin America to discuss opportunities for the implementation of the Regional Plan (by invitation), Wednesday, August 16, 7:30

am to 8:30 am, Hotel Marriott Toronto Bloor Yorkville

- **Abstract** WEPE0764: A Comparison of four mass media campaigns against homophobia in Latin America, Wednesday, August 16
- **Abstract** CDC0313: Tracking the course of the HIV epidemic through the 2nd Generation Surveillance in Jamaica, Survey of FSW, **Abstract** accepted for publication on CD and Internet

More on the TB/HIV co-infection workshop: <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/DPC/CD/tb-hiv-aug-06.htm>

For comprehensive information about PAHO/WHO activities in Toronto go to: <http://www.who.int/hiv/toronto2006/en/index.html>

UNGASS Becomes Venue for LAC Voices

For the first time in a global HIV meeting, a high level and diverse GROUP of Latin American and Caribbean institutions and individuals gathered to examine the regional challenges and opportunities to address the epidemic. During the UNGASS meeting in New York in June, presidents, prime-ministers, ministers of health and civil society representatives participated in a special session convened by the UN Regional Director's Group for LAC. One of the highlights was a video addressing the challenges and opportunities of the response to the epidemic in the region (see link below). In the occasion PAHO director, Dr. Mirta Roses, said the response to HIV in the region is "notable and evident" but further steps and stronger commitments against the epidemic are needed. "This is about the only region in the world in which heads of state established a regional target for the 3 by 5 Initiative, expressed in the "Declaration of Nuevo Leon" she said.

More:

- Dr. Mirta Roses closing remarks: http://www.paho.org/English/D/NY_UNGASS_TalkingNotes_Eng_Jun2-06.htm
- Video *Challenges and opportunities to address the HIV epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean*: <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/Violeta.aspx> (English only)
- Video *Message from El Salvador's President Antonio Saca*: <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/ungass.aspx>

Countries of the Americas Launch Plan for the Health Sector

The launch of the Regional HIV/STI Plan for the Health Sector 2006-2015 paved the way for countries in the Region to take a comprehensive approach to scaling up the response to HIV. The Regional Plan was approved in 2005 by all countries in the Region and aims to help LAC stop and reverse the spread of HIV by 2015, in accordance with goal 6 of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Regional Plan goals include:

- Universal access to comprehensive health care services, including prevention and treatment with ARV by 2010;
- Reduction by half of the number of new HIV infections by 2010, with an additional reduction of 50 percent between 2010 and 2015; and
- Reduction in the incidence of mother to child transmission of HIV at lower levels than the 5 percent for 2015, as well as a reduction of the incidence of congenital syphilis to less than 0.5 cases by 1000 live births.

Over the next decade, PAHO will work at all levels to support the rollout of the Regional Plan in countries through advocacy, technical assistance, and financial support. The Plan was launched in November, in El Salvador, during the CONCASIDA/FORO meetings. More: http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/hiv_reg_plan.htm (full content of the Plan), <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/pr051103.htm> (press release)

Region met 3 by 5 “Nuevo León” Goal

The region of the Americas has surpassed the regional 3 by 5 target to have 600,000 people under treatment by the end of 2005, in line with the goal set by heads of state during the 2004 Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey, Mexico and its Nuevo León Declaration. As of December 2005, a total of 680,000 people in the Americas were under ARV therapy, over 300,000 of these in Latin America and the Caribbean. This was possible thanks to an extensive mobilization of human and financial resources within countries and from the international sector. Though gaps in coverage vary significantly among subregions, all countries in the region saw increases in the number of people under ART in the 2004-2005 period. The 3 by 5 Initiative launched by WHO in 2003 aimed to provide ARV therapy to three million people requiring treatment in the developing countries. More: <http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/pr060602b.htm>

Country 3 by 5 Plans Supported by PAHO

Thirty-seven countries in the Region developed 3 by 5 work plans detailing activities to be undertaken with support of PAHO's technical and financial cooperation. Most of the resources were used to strengthen health system infrastructure, including human resource capacity and expansion of services. Strategic plans for national responses to HIV were developed in Guyana and Guatemala. Prevention efforts included a national media campaign addressing homophobia in Mexico, “Know Your Status” campaigns in the Bahamas and Suriname, and a project in Uruguay involving vulnerable groups. The supply of post-exposure treatment kits for health workers and sexual assault victims was expanded in Peru and Costa Rica. In Belize and elsewhere, resources were devoted to improving services for prevention of mother-to-child transmission. New entry points for HIV care were created in Colombia, for reproductive health services, and in Honduras, Nicaragua, and Belize for domestic violence services. In Cuba, Nicaragua, and Peru, major efforts were initiated to decentralize HIV services. Information systems were upgraded in Nicaragua and Venezuela, and bulletins with HIV data were created in Argentina and Guatemala. On the US/Mexico border, PAHO implemented a project to improve surveillance and estimation of HIV prevalence among vulnerable groups. Virtually all countries in the Region held training workshops for health personnel at all levels, including community health workers, technicians, pharmacists, nurses, and doctors. Implementation of 3 by 5 in the Americas by PAHO was supported by funding from the Canadian International Development Agency and other development partners. To read the full report, *Towards Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Care and Treatment: 3 by 5 Report for the Americas*, go to <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/3X5AmericasReport.pdf>

Second TAC Meeting Makes New Recommendations

The second meeting of PAHO's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on HIV took place in Brasilia in January 2006 and was attended by TAC members, PAHO HIV staff, national HIV program managers and development partners. The main objectives were to report on PAHO's contribution to the 3 by 5 Initiative and to share accomplishments and challenges of countries in the region in the expansion of HIV care, treatment and prevention. This is a summary of the closing remarks by TAC co-chairman Paul Farmer:

- Universal access is an established goal in the Region
- Supportive legal frameworks, effective leadership, and sound policies are required for scaling up prevention and care
- A lack of human resources is widespread and hinders efforts to scale up programs
- The Regional Plan provides a strategic framework for the health sector to move forward universal access in the Region
- There is consensus on the main principles of the Regional Plan, though there were questions regarding the feasibility of prevention goals

- The involvement of civil society is essential

The next meeting will take place in Guatemala in early 2007, with a special focus on prevention. Comprehensive information about the meeting, including the TAC recommendations for PAHO's technical cooperation, is available at:

http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/TAC_2006.htm

New Policy on HIV in the Workplace Launched by PAHO

PAHO announced in July a new Human Resources Policy on HIV in the Workplace, with the goal of preventing HIV infection among personnel and their spouses, partners and dependents, and of taking better care of those who already have the virus. The policy ensures confidentiality on HIV status, provides information and support for staff, and makes voluntary testing and counseling available. It also clarifies that existing health insurance coverage and premiums for PAHO staff will not be affected by HIV status. PAHO personnel in all offices will have access to condoms. A workshop on homophobia is also planned this year for senior management. To get a copy of the policy, send a message to sida@paho.org.

Group Follows Up on Price Negotiation

PAHO and several partners met in March 2006 to define a strategy to monitor and implement the ARV prices negotiated in Buenos Aires. Participants approved the development of a monitoring and evaluation system of the implementation of the negotiated prices, committed to identifying obstacles for the implementation of the prices and agreed to examine opportunities to expand the negotiated prices to Central American and Caribbean countries. The Buenos Aires negotiation took place in August 2005, bringing together 11 Latin American governments and 26 pharmaceutical companies, and resulted in a 15 to 55 percent price reduction for the treatment regimens most commonly used in the Region. More: http://www.paho.org/english/ad/fch/ai/antiretrovirals_HP.htm

Fund Obtains Prices Equal to Buenos Aires negotiation

From March 2005 to March 2006 the PAHO Strategic Fund purchased US\$9.8 million worth of ARVs. This purchase included 13 of the 29 products negotiated in Buenos Aires. Analysis of the purchases indicates that the countries have procured ARVs at prices equal to or lower than those negotiated in Buenos Aires. Significantly, the Fund has extended these prices to Central American and Caribbean countries that did not participate in the negotiations. The year 2005 was a time of great progress for the Fund, a mechanism established to improve access to essential drugs and public health supplies in the Americas. The year ended with the greatest mobilization of essential public health supplies since its creation. The recent addition of Belize, the Dominican Republic and Suriname brings the number of participating countries to 17. For further information, see <http://www.paho.org/English/AD/THS/EV/perspective.htm> (Strategic Fund home page) and http://www.paho.org/English/DD/PIN/ptoday04_sep05.htm (article "PAHO Urges Greater Use of Strategic Fund")

CAREC develops strategy for HIV Drug Resistance

The introduction of ARV therapy into the Caribbean has resulted in the reduction in the AIDS mortality rate in some countries. The history of treatment programs in industrialized countries suggests that some degree of resistance will inevitably develop given the necessity of life long treatment with antiretrovirals. WHO has developed an "essential package" to support a national HIV drug resistance strategy in resource-limited countries. Last May, CAREC, PAHO/WHO Caribbean Epidemiology Centre, in partnership with the Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Fort de France, in Martinique, organized the "First workshop on the Development of a Caribbean Strategy for the Prevention, Surveillance and

Monitoring of HIV Drug Resistance". Follow-up includes the assessment of the laboratories in Martinique and Puerto Rico to serve as regional WHO certified drug resistance laboratories and the identification of the list of Early Warning Indicators. CAREC is also planning a follow-up workshop in December for training in the surveillance and monitoring protocols and the use of the WHO HIV drug resistance database. More:

<http://www.carec.org/>

Redla+ examines barriers to access HIV care

Interviews with 583 people living with HIV in Bolivia, Honduras and Venezuela showed that 28,5% of them had to move residence after the diagnosis. The lack of availability of HIV care and treatment in their city or neighborhood was mentioned as the main reason for the move. These results came from the pre-test of a future study to be conducted by REDLA+, the Latin American network of people living with HIV, in partnership with PAHO and UNAIDS. The study will involve ten countries (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panamá, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, and Uruguay) and will generate comprehensive information about the existing availability of ARV treatment and obstacles to access care in these countries.

Agua Buena Study Shows Progress and Gaps in ARV Treatment

A study carried out by the Agua Buena Association indicates that access to ARV treatment has improved significantly during the last three years in Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, the study, developed with support of PAHO, HIVOS, and Merck, showed that important gaps remain regarding who can access treatment in the countries analyzed. Agua Buena also identified problems in the sustainability of the treatment programs, high prices for second-line drugs and, poor access to drugs for opportunistic infections. More:

www.aquabuena.org

UNICEF and PAHO Partner to Improve PMTCT in Central America

UNICEF and PAHO will work together to scale-up PMTCT in Central America. The two agencies will invite other UN agencies, governments, development partners, and civil society to coordinating activities through joint plans of action. The partnership will support technical collaboration for capacity building, technical cooperation (including North-South or South-South exchanges), advocacy and resource mobilization and promote greater accountability of national and regional efforts through strong monitoring and evaluation. The agencies will also develop a joint situation analysis on the status of PMTCT in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

Human Rights Efforts in Jamaica Supported

PAHO's HIV Unit and the Areas of Health Services and Legal Affairs served as technical advisors and facilitators for the workshop "Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Context of HIV/AIDS" in Jamaica in April. This training workshop was attended by governmental agencies and organizations of civil society active in health, law and HIV issues. As a follow up, PAHO offered support to the efforts of the government and civil society to the current review of the Jamaican constitution. The organization also offered to make recommendations, if requested by the Government, with regard to international human rights norms and standards in the context of the public health law and other domestic laws such as the "Offences Against the Persons Act", which criminalize sex between consenting adult men.

Haiti gets plan to monitor resistance

Haiti has developed a national plan for the surveillance of the resistance of HIV to ARV drugs. This plan was elaborated during a joint mission of WHO and PAHO in May 2006. There is strong interest in this issue from the Haitian Ministry of Health, as well as from

other institutions active in the response to HIV. CDC will look into the possibility of funding part of the surveillance project, while mobilization of additional resources will be needed for the remainder of the budget. To get a copy of the plan write to sida@paho.org

Web Page on 25 Years of the Epidemic Created

PAHO launched in June a web page dedicated to the 25 years of the response to the HIV epidemic. Topics covered include a situation analysis, interviews with key stakeholders, prevention strategies, an article by Dr Mirta Roses, and a special interview with activist Rosa González, from Honduras. The site also contains statements made at UNGASS by presidents, prime ministers and delegates from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, San Vincent, St Kitts, and Venezuela. More: <http://www.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Sida25.htm> (Spanish Only)

New Guide for Youth Counseling Launched

PAHO developed a new guide for youth-centered counseling, to assist front-line providers in reaching young people and effectively promoting sexual health. It contains detailed and theory-based actions and methods to improve the quality of services for young people. Youth-centered counseling, to be effective, must respond to young people's individual sexual behavior, context, and developmental stage. This guide aims to help providers engage in counseling that best fits the needs and wants of youth, providing the young person with the opportunity to learn essential skills for sexual and reproductive health development. It includes a book and an accompanying CD. More: <http://www.paho.org/english/ad/fch/ca/sa-youth.pdf>

Caribbean Gets Guidelines for Provider-Initiated VCT

The Caribbean Guidelines for Scale Up of HIV Testing and Counseling have been developed by Caribbean health professionals under the technical leadership of CAREC, PAHO/WHO Caribbean Epidemiology Centre. The guidelines are part of a process for the reorientation of HIV testing and counseling services to adopt the provider-initiated approach, the opt-out method. CAREC has also adapted the WHO protocols for training counselors to suit the Caribbean context. Provider-initiated VCT is particularly relevant for high density settings, where populations are more likely to be HIV positive (e.g. STI clinics) or where the opportunity for testing should not be missed because of the potential benefits (e.g. antenatal clinics). Training modules are being finalized by CAREC and will eventually accompany the guidelines to support the work of public health managers at both the national and site levels. More: <http://www.carec.org/>

Sexual Health and HIV Prevention in Indigenous Populations Get Framework

Launched by PAHO, the booklet Promoting Sexual Health and Preventing HIV/AIDS and STIs in Indigenous Populations of the Americas: Abya-Yala Kuyarinakui, provides a conceptual framework for promoting sexual health and preventing HIV infection in indigenous/aboriginal/ native populations. At the same time, it seeks to encourage the compilation and analysis of health promotion and health care experiences among, with, and by indigenous peoples and communities, emphasizing sexual health and the prevention and treatment of HIV and STIs. The booklet's subtitle, Abya-Yala Kuyarinakui, is from the Kichwa and Kuna languages and translates as "Love Relations in the Americas." More: <http://www.paho.org/Spanish/AD/FCH/AI/SSIA06.pdf> (Spanish only)

What to Say: PAHO Helps Produce UN Advocacy Publication

Together with other UNAIDS cosponsors, PAHO launched the publication *What UN Staff in Latin America and the Caribbean Need to Say About the HIV Epidemic*. Based on the United Nations' technical knowledge about the epidemic, this document aims to promote change at the political and social levels by focusing on the changes that are most needed

and most difficult to achieve. It will help the UN system speak with one voice while addressing the HIV epidemic in the region and is particularly useful for meetings with authorities and interviews with journalists. While produced for the UN staff, other audiences may find it useful for advocacy activities. More:

http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/UN_advocacy_document_english.pdf

How to Say: PAHO Launches New HIV language guidelines

To promote the use of language that is appropriate for the current phase of the epidemic and consonant with the Latin American and Caribbean response to HIV, PAHO issued the *HIV-related Language: PAHO 2006 Update*. The document, primarily designed for PAHO staff, suggests vocabulary that is sensitive to the needs of people with HIV and vulnerable groups. Key changes include the preferred use of the terms “HIV”, instead of “HIV/AIDS” (a change that PAHO is still implementing), “sida” instead of “SIDA” (in Spanish), “sex worker” instead of “commercial sex worker”, “people with HIV” instead of “PLWHA” and its variations, and the use of “homosexual men”, “gay,” and other non-derogatory and culturally appropriate terms when adequate. More:

<http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/HIVLANGUAGE.PDF>

Carol Vlassoff retires as PAHO HIV Chief

After 28 years of work at the international level on population and reproductive health issues, including the response to HIV, PAHO’s HIV Unit Chief Carol Vlassoff is retiring at the end of August. She has worked for PAHO in the last 6 years, and was Representative in Suriname before moving to Washington. Under her leadership, PAHO’s response to HIV greatly advanced. In June 2006 the 3 by 5 Team received the “Outstanding Team” Award as recognition of these efforts. In a recently published interview she makes a review of her professional career and of the challenges brought by the HIV epidemic. More:

http://www.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Sida25_vlassoff.htm (Spanish only)

Most Frequently Used HIV Acronyms

http://www.paho.org/English/AD/FCH/AI/Acronym_hivAIDS.pdf