



## OFFICIAL PRESS ADVISORY

### Call at AIDS 2012 for action to remove HIV-related travel restrictions

#### ***HIV Travel Restrictions: Latest Developments*** **Satellite Session – International AIDS Conference 2012** **Washington DC**

**Saturday, 21 July, 2012 (Washington, D.C.) - On Sunday, 22 July 2012, a Satellite Session organized by UNAIDS and Republic of Korea, at the AIDS 2012 conference in Washington, D.C. from 9-11am in Mini-room 7, will discuss the latest developments and challenges of HIV travel restrictions around the world.**

To date, there are still 46 countries, territories and areas that apply some form of restriction on the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV (“HIV-related travel restrictions”). In many cases, these restrictions were put in place when there was great fear and little knowledge about how HIV was transmitted and what the health implications were of being HIV positive.

Public health and human rights experts have called for the removal of such restrictions for many years, characterizing them as discriminatory and ineffective to protect public health. Now, with significant advancements in scientific knowledge about HIV and its prevention and treatment, even more reasons to remove such restrictions have become apparent.

Dr Paul de Lay, Deputy Executive Director of the UNAIDS Programme said "Every individual should have the right to freedom of movement, regardless of their HIV status. UNAIDS is opposed to any restriction imposed on people living with HIV and restricting movement only on the basis of their HIV status. These restrictions are discriminatory."

Besides being discriminatory, travel restrictions have no public health justification. Often they open the door to additional forms of abuse including violation of the human rights of people living with HIV and an increase in stigma. HIV should not be considered a condition that poses a threat to public health in relation to travel because, although it is transmissible, HIV cannot be transmitted by the mere presence of a person with HIV in a country or by casual contact.

#### **Objectives of the Satellite Session:**

Key figures from governments, the medical field and civil society, including people living with HIV, will discuss and respond to the current situation regarding HIV-related travel restrictions. The Satellite Session *HIV Travel Restrictions: Latest Developments* will present an open discussion about HIV travel restrictions, highlighting their public health and human rights’ impact. The session will provide global, regional and national perspectives on such restrictions, focusing among others on presenting:

- An overview of the global situation
- Current efforts to remove HIV travel restrictions in the Republic of Korea
- A testimonial of someone who has experienced HIV travel restrictions
- The experience of removing HIV travel restrictions
- The impact of HIV travel restrictions in the Gulf States on migrant workers from Asia

**Call for action:**

In line with commitments made in the 2011 *Political Declaration*, the Satellite Session will call on governments to remove HIV-related travel restrictions and ensure that an effective and rights-based approach to HIV is in place in all countries.

IAS President Dr Elly Katabira, Professor of Medicine at Makerere University in Uganda, said "The return of the conference to the United States is the result of years of dedicated advocacy to end a misguided policy based on fear, rather than science, and represents a significant victory for public health and human rights." Dr Katabira is the International Chair of AIDS 2012.

The Obama Administration lifted HIV-related travel restrictions in 2010.

**Co-chairs:**

- Professor Myongsei Sohn, Dean, School of Public Health – Yonsei University, Republic of Korea
- Dr Paul De Lay, Deputy Executive Director, UNAIDS

**Organiser:**

- Korea Center for Disease Control and Yonsei University School of Public Health, UNAIDS

**Speakers:**

- Susan Timberlake, Chief, Human Rights and Law Division, UNAIDS
- Bong-hyun Kim, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Dr Dukhyoung Lee, Director General of Disease Prevention Centre, Centre for Disease Control, Republic of Korea
- George Bartolome, United Western Visayas Inc.
- Representative of US –tbc; and Representative of Ukraine - Dr Maryna Zelenska, Ministry of Health
- Malu Marin, CARAM Asia

**End**

**Further information:**

The Global Database on HIV Specific Travel & Residence Restrictions: <http://www.hivtravel.org>

The International Aids Conference 2012 official website: <http://aids2012.org/>

**Conference Programme**

AIDS 2012 will include the presentation of more than 3,600 scientific abstracts across the range of HIV-related disciplines along with non-abstract-driven sessions addressing key issues and the vibrant Global Village and Youth Programme. All accepted abstracts are available through the conference website.

**Online Viewing**

A substantial portion of the conference will be available through webcasts produced by the Kaiser Family Foundation ([www.kff.org/aids2012](http://www.kff.org/aids2012)), as well as videos and slide presentations available through the conference's Programme-at-Glance (<http://pag.aids2012.org>).

## **Conference Organization**

AIDS 2012 is convened by the International AIDS Society and the conference's international partners: the Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+); the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO); the International Community of Women with HIV/AIDS (ICW) and the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition (CVC); and Sidaction.

The U.S.- based Black AIDS Institute; the District of Columbia Department of Health (DOH); the HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA); the National Institutes of Health (NIH); the White House Office of National AIDS Policy (ONAP); and the U.S. Positive Women's Network (USPWN) serve as local partners.

## **AIDS 2012: Join the conversation**

Get the latest conference updates and share your thoughts and ideas through the Conference Facebook and Twitter. We are tweeting – @aids2012 – and hope many of you will tweet along with us, using #AIDS2012 to keep the conversation going. Become a fan of AIDS 2012 on Facebook and stay in touch with the latest conference updates and developments. Please visit [www.facebook.com/aids2012](http://www.facebook.com/aids2012) to become a fan. If your group or organization is participating in AIDS 2012, we welcome posts of photos and videos of your work on this page. Tell us why you are coming to Washington and what you hope to gain from AIDS 2012.

## **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, which will be held in Washington, D.C., in July 2012, and lead organizer of the IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention.

## **About UNAIDS**

Leveraging the AIDS response, UNAIDS works to build political action and to promote the rights all of people for better results for global health and development. Globally, it sets policy and is the source of HIV-related data. In countries, UNAIDS brings together the resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and 10 UN system organizations for coordinated and accountable efforts to unite the world against AIDS.

## **For more information about this release:**

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