

MEDIA LEADERS COMMIT TO FIGHT AIDS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

MOSCOW, 27 October 2004 – Media executives from Russia, Ukraine, and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) have committed to fight HIV/AIDS in their countries, many of which are experiencing some of the fastest-growing epidemics in the world. Meeting today at the first-ever Eurasia Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS in Moscow, media leaders committed to using the power of mass media to help turn the tide of AIDS. Today's Summit was organized by Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS (TPAA), Gazprom-Media and the Global Media AIDS Initiative – a joint effort of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the United Nations' Department of Public Information.

The Eurasian media leaders announced today a number of new commitments that promise to take the fight against AIDS in the region to an entirely new level.

- The Russian Media Partnership to Combat HIV/AIDS (RMP) – including member companies Gazprom-Media, Prof-Media, ROL, STS, RIA Novosti and SK Press, among others – announced that the first round of public service advertisements will be launched on 29 November 2004. The RMP is an unprecedented cross-platform and cross-market initiative that will deliver AIDS messages to the Russian population via public service advertisements on television, radio, print, and online platforms; long-form radio and television programming and print publications; access to free informational resources; briefings for journalists, editors and producers to improve the volume and quality of AIDS coverage; and special events. To date, partners have pledged over US\$30 million in commercial airtime for the first year of campaign advertisements and longer-format programming, including prime-time television coverage on national networks, including NTV, STS and TNT. The RMP is an outcome of the Global Media AIDS Initiative and is coordinated by TPAA.
- The Elena Franchuk Foundation announced today that their HIV/AIDS public awareness and prevention campaign in Ukraine will continue into 2005. The advertisements have appeared on many platforms – including television, radio, and print – across the country.
- Leading media outlets of Central Asia supported the Summit declaration committing their companies to expanding public knowledge of AIDS through providing placement for HIV/AIDS messaging, encouraging AIDS programming, and offering AIDS workplace trainings for their staff.

- American actor Richard Gere participated in today's Summit and is also helping to mobilize local celebrities on HIV/AIDS. As a follow-up to today's Summit, Gere and Andrey Makarevich, with support from TPAA and the Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, will bring together a group of Russian and international celebrities on October 28 in Moscow to identify specific ways the group can support public awareness in the region.
- The Kaiser Family Foundation and Viacom, with additional financial resources from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are providing technical and communications expertise as well as supporting production costs for the public education campaign being developed for the Russian Media Partnership to Combat HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS also provides technical support to the campaign, which will launch at the end of November.
- The Kaiser Family Foundation, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and in partnership with TPAA and UNAIDS, held a journalism briefing in conjunction with today's Summit to help reporters better understand HIV/AIDS and how to cover the epidemic. Kaiser and TPAA also announced today a new joint Media Fellowships Program to provide mini-grants to journalists in Russia and Ukraine who propose specific projects on HIV/AIDS and related health issues and are selected through a competitive application process.

According to UNAIDS and the World Health Organization, as many as two-thirds of the 45 million new HIV infections projected to occur worldwide over the next decade could be averted with more effective prevention and public education efforts. In the absence of urgent and targeted measures by governments, the private sector and civil society, the AIDS epidemic will have a catastrophic impact on social stability, economic development and national security in the region.

Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia have some of the highest rates of growth of new HIV infections in the world. The number of people living with HIV in the region rose from 890,000 in 2001 to 1.3 million in 2003 – almost a 50% increase in only two years. According to UNAIDS, HIV infections in the region continue to grow, primarily among young people under age 30. Misinformation leads to lack of understanding of the disease and methods of prevention as well to stigma and discrimination that block public discussion of the epidemic and the emergence of a national response to HIV/AIDS.

“It is a great honor for Gazprom-Media to co-chair today's Summit. Early this year in New York, Kofi Annan proposed an initiative to unite the world's leading companies in the fight against HIV/AIDS. And today in Moscow, the leading media groups expressed their commitment to leverage resources of their companies to stem the HIV/AIDS epidemic, rapidly growing in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The most important thing we can do is change the society's attitude towards the problem. We must in fact actively engage in efforts to slow the spread of the epidemic and help reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. Leading media companies in Russia, Ukraine and the CIS will take part in this effort, and, we hope, our governments and the business sector will join us,” asserted **Alexander Dybal**, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Gazprom-Media and Chairman of the Russian Media Partnership to Combat HIV/AIDS.

In a special message to Summit participants, United Nations Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** emphasized the unique contributions media leaders can make in the fight against AIDS: “As leaders of the media, you have the power and reach to disseminate the information people need

to protect themselves from the virus – especially young people. You can bring the disease out of the shadows and get people talking about it in an open, informed way. You can create an enabling environment where individuals are free to explore ways of keeping themselves safe and changing their behaviour if necessary.”

Dr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director, added: “The media remains underutilized in the fight against AIDS. Media leaders have an important role to play in helping to stem the spread of HIV by disseminating accurate information about HIV and AIDS. Their participation in the Media Summit marks their determination to contribute towards a world free of AIDS.”

“The media companies gathered today are showing important leadership in taking on HIV/AIDS at this critical moment,” said **Drew Altman**, President and CEO of the Kaiser Family Foundation. “Through sustained efforts the media can play a critical role in breaking the silence and mobilizing society to confront HIV/AIDS.”

“Eurasia has a unique but limited opportunity to turn the tide of HIV/AIDS before it becomes a tragedy of historic proportions. We are incredibly encouraged by the leadership demonstrated by the companies who joined us today,” underscored **John Tedstrom**, President and CEO, Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS. “They are certain to become a powerful and a positive force in the fight against AIDS in Eurasia, and it is a great privilege for TPAA to be part of this powerful new initiative.”

The Eurasia Media Leaders Summit builds on the success and momentum generated by the first-ever meeting of global media leaders on AIDS, held at the United Nations in January 2004. At that meeting, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched the Global Media AIDS Initiative to urge the world’s leading media companies to come together to respond to the growing AIDS epidemic. The Kaiser Family Foundation and UNAIDS were asked to take the lead in advancing the Initiative. As part of the Global Media AIDS Initiative, Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS, UNAIDS, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the United Nations Department of Public Information and Gazprom-Media organized today’s unprecedented event to encourage media leaders to join the fight against AIDS in Eurasia.

###

Contact:

Natalya Katsap
Manager, Media Partnerships
Transatlantic Partners Against AIDS (TPAA)
Tel: +7 (095) 956-0578
Mobile: +7 (905) 754-5340
Email: nkatsap@tpaa.net

Elena Tamazova
UNAIDS/Moscow
Tel: +7 (095) 232-5599
Mobile: +7 (916) 547-9898
Email: tamazovae@unaid.org

Rob Graham
Kaiser Family Foundation
Tel: +1 (650) 854-9400
Email: rgraham@kff.org