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2009 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting Opens in Namibia

Namibia welcomes more 1,500 HIV/AIDS Implementers

Windhoek, Namibia – The 2009 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting opened on June 10 in Namibia, drawing more than 1,500 HIV/AIDS implementers from more than 55 countries around the world to Windhoek.

H.E. Hifikepunye Pohamba, President of the Republic of Namibia opened the meeting saying: “This meeting represents a renewed call to all partners to continue working together to fight the AIDS pandemic.” He added, “It serves as another important platform to showcase the successes that have been achieved over the years. This in turn should motivate everyone to persevere in the noble work that is being done.”

The conference's theme this year is “Optimizing the Response: Partnerships for Sustainability.” Recognizing the importance of a sustainable global AIDS response, the focus of this year's meeting will be on optimizing the impact of prevention, treatment and care programs; enhancing program quality; promoting coordination among partners; and encouraging innovative responses to the pandemic.

“The results that have been achieved in recent years have been extraordinary, and these successes can be seen in lives touched at the national, community and family level,” said Thomas J. Walsh, Deputy U.S Global AIDS Coordinator (Acting) and Chief of Staff. “Yet, it is also an important time to recommit ourselves. There is still a great deal to be done, many strategic partnerships to build, and many lives to better through prevention, treatment and care.”

"The financial crisis has meant that investing wisely now is more important than ever," said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "The Implementers' Meeting will help us find ways to make programming more efficient and optimize partnerships. This will greatly enhance efforts to scale up towards universal access, which will yield dividends for generations to come."

"We are entering uncharted territory in HIV/AIDS, challenged by inadequate emphasis on prevention, uncertainties around best use of antiretroviral therapy for prevention and treatment, and increasing inequity," said Dr. Kevin De Cock, Director of the WHO HIV/AIDS Department. "Universal access will slip through our fingers unless we reframe it in the broader context of all health-related Millennium Development Goals, with services delivered through stronger health systems and primary health care."

"It is crucial that the global community, developing and donor countries, civil society, charitable groups, and the private sector work together to ensure that funding for HIV programs remains on track toward universal coverage because the price of not doing so is too high to accept," emphasized Elizabeth Lule, Manager of the World Bank's AIDS Campaign Team for Africa (ACTAfrica), who is attending the HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting and chaired the plenary session on the effect of the economic crisis on the international response to HIV and AIDS.

The meeting is being hosted by the Government of the Republic of Namibia and co-sponsored by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR); the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; UNAIDS; UNICEF; the World Bank; the World Health Organization; and the Global Network of People Living with HIV.

During the four-day conference, 345 abstracts will be presented by representatives from governments, non-governmental organizations including faith- and community-based groups, multilateral organizations, the private sector, and groups of people living with HIV/AIDS. Through these presentations and dialogue, conference attendees will share best practices and lessons learned during the implementation of multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS programs that will directly impact the future of the global AIDS response.

To follow the meeting live during the conference, visit the blog of former *Boston Globe* reporter John Donnelly on the Center for Global Health Policy website at http://sciencespeaks.wordpress.com/category/hiv_conference/.

For more information on the meeting, please visit www.hivimplementers.org. An archived webcast of select sessions from the meeting and related online resources will be available following the meeting.

Information about the host of the meeting:

The Government of Namibia combats HIV/AIDS through a comprehensive response that includes strengthening the enabling environment; prevention; increasing access to

treatment, care and support; mitigating socio-economic impacts; and integrated and coordinated program management. Our guiding principles are: broad political leadership and commitment; promotion and protection of human rights; people living with HIV/AIDS are central; reduction of stigma and discrimination; multi-sector engagement, partnerships and civil society involvement; good governance, transparency, accountability and sustainability; and evidence based action to enhance the continuum of prevention, care and support through a responsive and flexible systems approach. For more information about the Government of Namibia (GRN), please visit www.grnnet.gov.na. And for further information about Namibia's response to HIV/AIDS, please visit www.hivresponse.gov.na.

Information about the sponsors of the meeting:

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) was launched in 2003 to combat global HIV/AIDS, and is the largest commitment by any nation to combat a single disease in history. Working in partnership with host nations, over ten years PEPFAR plans to support treatment for at least 3 million people, prevention of 12 million new infections, and care for 12 million people, including 5 million orphans and vulnerable children. For more information, please visit www.PEPFAR.gov.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a unique global public/private partnership dedicated to attracting and disbursing additional resources to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. This partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities represents a new approach to international health financing. The Global Fund works in close collaboration with other bilateral and multilateral organizations to supplement existing efforts dealing with the three diseases. For more information about the Global Fund, please visit www.theglobalfund.org.

UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS Web site at www.unaids.org.

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, safe water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information, please visit www.unicef.org.

The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries. The Bank provides low-interest loans, interest-free credits and grants to developing country governments for a wide array of purposes that include investments in education, health, infrastructure, private sector development, agriculture, and environmental and natural resource management. In HIV/AIDS, World Bank support helps countries prevent HIV infections while scaling up treatment, care and mitigation support to all who need it. The Bank emphasizes using evidence to develop sound strategies that focus on results. For more information on the World Bank's response to HIV/AIDS, please visit www.worldbank.org/aids.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. For more information, please visit www.who.int.

The Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+) is a global network for and by people living with HIV. GNP+ advocates to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV. The central theme for the work of GNP+ is Reclaiming Our Lives! GNP+ programs are organized under four platforms of action: Sexual and reproductive health and rights; HIV Prevention; Human rights; and Empowerment. For more information, please visit www.gnpplus.net.