

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

THE GLOBAL COMMISSION ON HIV & THE LAW HOLDS REGIONAL DIALOGUE TO HELP STRENGTHEN HIV, HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT RESPONSES IN LATIN AMERICA

120 participants from 18 countries in the region will discuss how law, law enforcement and access to justice can improve HIV, health and development responses in the region

São Paulo, June 22, 2011 – HIV responses in Latin America still face barriers entrenched in inequality, prejudice and violence. According to the latest data, most cases of HIV in the region are concentrated in and around groups considered be at higher risk such as men who have sex with men (MSM), transgender people, drug users, as well as sex workers and their clients. Social stigma continues to keep many of these epidemics hidden and unacknowledged.

Except for Venezuela and Uruguay, all Latin American countries have specific legislation for the treatment and prevention of HIV. In spite of guarantees of equal opportunity for women, they continue to experience high rates of violence and increased vulnerability to HIV. According to Maria Tallarico, the leader of United Nations Development Programmes's (UNDP) HIV Practice in Latin America and the Caribbean, "homophobia, transphobia, and violence continue to keep the most vulnerable people in the shadows and out of the reach of life-saving HIV prevention and treatment services."

To address the gaps between the 'law on the books' and the reality for those most vulnerable to HIV, the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, an independent body that brings together some of the most respected leaders in public policy, human rights, law and HIV, will hold a meeting on 26 and 27 June in São Paulo. The Latin America Regional Dialogue, supported by UNDP and UNAIDS, is the fourth in a series of seven regional dialogues being held across the globe.

Gathered in Sao Paulo for two days, 120 participants from 18 countries in the region and the Chair of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, along with Commissioner Ana Helena Chacón-Echeverría, will discuss how law, law enforcement and access to justice can improve HIV, health and development responses in the region.

Main topics to be discussed include:

- Laws and practices related to the criminalization of people living with HIV and populations vulnerable to HIV;
- Laws and practices related to discrimination and violence against women

- Laws and practices affecting young people and children in the region
- Intellectual property rights and access to essential medicines and treatment

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law aims to deepen understanding of how the law can help or hinder HIV, which, according to the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Report, is still the leading cause of death from infectious diseases in the world.

According to Cesar Nunez, Director of the UNAIDS Regional Support Team for Latin America, “bold new targets were set by world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on AIDS, concluded this month in New York.” These far reaching goals on HIV prevention, treatment, care, support and human rights are described in the [Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS: Intensifying our Efforts to eliminate HIV/AIDS](#) adopted by the General Assembly on 10 June, 2011.

The declaration notes that HIV prevention strategies inadequately focus on populations at higher risk—specifically men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs and sex workers, and calls on countries to review laws which are impeding effective HIV prevention responses.

As noted at the High Level Meeting on AIDS by UNDP Administrator Helen Clark, “we cannot close our eyes to the moral, social and legal complexities that continue to impede our efforts to halt and reverse the spread of HIV. The institution of the Global Commission stands firmly at the center of this crossroads. It is an opportunity to improve the global response to HIV.”

HIV epidemics in Latin America have changed little in recent years. The total number of people living with HIV continues to grow to an estimated 1.4 million in 2009 from 1.1 million in 2001 due largely to the availability of life saving antiretroviral therapy. An estimated 92 000 new HIV infections occurred in the region in 2009, according to UNAIDS data.

Note to editors:

The Global Commission on HIV and the Law was launched in June 2010 by UNDP on behalf of the UNAIDS family to provide global leadership on HIV-related legal and human rights issues by analysing what is known about the interactions between the legal environments, human rights and HIV; fostering evidence-informed public dialogue on the need for rights-based law and policy in the context of HIV; and identifying clear and actionable recommendations with a concrete plan for follow-up. For more information, see www.hivlawcommission.org

The members of the Commission are: former President of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Brazil, Commission Chair), Justice Edwin Cameron (South Africa), Ms. Ana Helena Chacón-Echeverría (Costa Rica), Mr. Charles Chauvel (New Zealand), Dr. Shereen El Feki (Egypt, Commission Vice-Chair), Ms. Bience Gawanas (Namibia), Dame Carol Kidu (Papua New Guinea), the Honourable Michael Kirby (Australia), the Honourable Barbara Lee (United States), Mr. Stephen Lewis (Canada), His Excellency Mr. Festus Mogae (Botswana), Mr. JVR Prasada Rao (India), Professor Sylvia Tamale (Uganda), Mr. Jon Ungphakorn (Thailand) and Professor Miriam Were (Kenya).

UNDP is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners. Learn more at www.undp.org

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at www.unaids.org

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