



## MELBOURNE MANIFESTO

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A manifesto was prepared for the Sixth ICAAP based on the position paper presented by AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific. This was published in the first of the daily *ICAAP Newspapers* and an invitation was extended to all interested parties to form a working group, which refined the original document to create this manifesto to represent the delegates of the Sixth ICAAP. It was intended to proclaim a *Melbourne Manifesto* to update and extend the *Manila Manifesto* of the Fourth ICAAP.

### *The Melbourne Manifesto:*

We, the delegates to the Sixth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (Melbourne October 4-10 2001) join together in drawing attention to the gravity of HIV/AIDS in our region, and call upon all people in the region to increase efforts to help slow the progress of the epidemic, to provide the best quality of care, support and treatment to those already infected, and to oppose all forms of stigma, discrimination and marginalisation of those infected with or vulnerable to infection by HIV;

In particular we note:

- the greater attention to the epidemic since we last met in 1999 in Kuala Lumpur, symbolised by the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly in June, the ministerial meeting alongside Sixth ICAAP and the forthcoming ASEAN summit;
- the epidemic is growing rapidly in parts of Asia Pacific, with close to a million new infections estimated to have occurred last year. If this growth is unchecked there will be a greater number of persons living with HIV in our region than in the rest of the world;
- the overwhelming majority of people in our region do not have access to the information, skills, tools and supportive environment necessary to prevent the spread of HIV. In particular socio-economic inequalities, huge population movements and the systematic oppression of women all help fuel the growth of the epidemic;
- throughout the region governments, religious leaders, educational institutions and even many NGOs refuse to acknowledge the existence of indigenous and ethnic minorities, sex workers, injecting drug users, refugees, migrants and mobile populations, homosexual men and women and transgendered people, or to provide such groups with adequate protection against discrimination and appropriate access to resources to prevent the spread of HIV;
- very few people with HIV in our region have access to adequate basic medical services, let alone the sophisticated and expensive therapies now available to fight HIV;
- that, with a few exceptions, the highest levels of government do not recognise either the catastrophic possibilities of the epidemic or the need for inter-sectoral and international cooperation to fight the epidemic.

We call upon government, religious, business and civil society leaders to support those most vulnerable to the threat and the reality of the epidemic. In particular:

- we call for a declaration by political, religious, business and civil society leaders that as long as HIV threatens us all, its eradication is a matter of human security;
- effective leadership to promote a continuum of efforts across care and prevention, one that both provides adequate resources and recognises that respect for human rights is the basis for good public health;
- an end to appeals to culture, tradition or religion as justification to prevent individuals from accessing the information, skills and tools necessary to respond to the threat of infection or to deny access to care, treatment and support;
- greater resources, both from the international community and from within the region itself, and, recognising the impact of the epidemic on human security, the reallocation of some resources currently devoted to military expenditure towards HIV/AIDS programs;
- greater collaboration across both countries and sectors which address structural inequalities which are increasing in our region due to rapid economic, social and political change;
- greatly expanded support for community-based education and care programs, for research into vaccines, treatments and prevention, and for an expanded effort to end discrimination and stigma based upon HIV status or vulnerability;
- greater efforts to expand the capacity of People with HIV/AIDS to be involved in the development and delivery of policies and programs, recognising that the empowerment of PLWHAs is both a moral imperative and a practical and effective contribution to controlling the epidemic.

As Peter Piot has said, "our aim should be to replace shame with solidarity and fear with hope".