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2007 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting Opens in Kigali, Rwanda

Kigali, Rwanda – The 2007 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting opens today in Kigali, and is expected to draw over 1,500 delegates from around the world. Rwanda was chosen to host the meeting in recognition of the country's leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS and the impressive results it has achieved.

The meeting is hosted by the Government of Rwanda and is co-sponsored by President Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the Secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Bank, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) is serving as the official Advisory Group, helping to ensure representation of people living with HIV/AIDS as expert implementers.

The theme of this year's meeting, "Scaling Up Through Partnerships," recognizes the rapid expansion of HIV/AIDS programs worldwide. Together, implementers will exchange lessons learned on building the capacity of local prevention, treatment, and care programs, maintaining quality control, and coordinating efforts. This forum will facilitate an open dialogue about future directions of HIV/AIDS programs, with a strong emphasis on implementation and identification of critical barriers and best practices.

The vast majority of conference delegates will travel from developing countries in Africa and other regions. In addition to government ministers, participants also will include a wide cross-section of HIV program implementers, including representatives from faith- and community-based groups and groups of people living with HIV/AIDS.

"It is an honor and privilege for the Government of Rwanda to host the 2007 HIV/AIDS Implementers' Meeting," noted Dr Innocent Nyaruhirira, Minister of State in the Rwandan Ministry of Health in charge of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics. "We believe that it is important for those doing the pressing work of responding to HIV/AIDS and often on the frontlines, to take time to meet, in order to share and learn from each other. We are optimistic that this gathering in Rwanda will provide just the right platform and enhance efforts to sustain the fight against HIV/AIDS worldwide."

"Many important implementation best practices are being developed, and this meeting is an opportunity to disseminate them as broadly as possible," said Ambassador Mark Dybul, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. "All partners must work together to implement high-quality, sustainable programs that deliver results and ensure coordinated action in support of host countries' national strategies."

"One of the Global Fund's highest priorities is to strengthening our partnerships with programs like PEPFAR and the UN agencies, and with the thousands of local groups, doctors and nurses who actually do the work of treating the sick, caring for the orphans, and preventing new infections," said Dr. Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. "Better coordination, less paperwork, sharing best practices – these sound dull but what they mean is using all we can for treatment, prevention and care, and helping save more lives. We commend PEPFAR for organizing this conference."

"This meeting will give UNAIDS a key opportunity to share our expertise and technical know-how with partners working on the ground," said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "Together we will address the practical implementation challenges, share experiences of what is working and where improvements are needed. This will be critical in establishing the next steps to scaling up the AIDS response towards universal access and making sure the money works."

"An AIDS-free generation can be a reality," said Doreen Mulenga, Acting Chief of HIV and AIDS for UNICEF. "We know what works – so let's use this knowledge. While children are increasingly on the agenda of policy makers, antiretroviral treatment still only reaches 15 percent of children in need and progress in preventing HIV in children is still lagging behind. Partners, including governments and donors, must increase and expand social services that will provide children in need with treatment, as well as protect them from HIV and the impact of AIDS. "

"It is now clear that there is no single ideal AIDS program, and that each country must work out its own solution, building on strong local evidence and learning from successes and mistakes alike," said Joy Phumaphi, Vice President of the World Bank's Human Development Network, a former WHO Assistant Director General, and former Health Minister of Botswana, 1999-2003. "The process has not always been smooth sailing, and still there are ups and downs, but through continuous learning and improvement countries, donors, community-based groups, and people living with AIDS, can support national prevention, treatment, care, and mitigation services that reach millions of infected and affected people in Africa, Asia, and other regions worldwide."

"The combined efforts of donors, affected nations, UN agencies and national authorities are providing substantial, ongoing progress in access to HIV services", said Dr Kevin De Cock, Director, HIV/AIDS department at WHO. "This meeting will allow partners to share important lessons learned during the implementation of multisectoral HIV/AIDS programs. Only by understanding what works and developing best practices can we hope to reach the targets for universal access by 2010."

Sessions from this meeting will be webcast by [kaisernetwork.org](http://www.kaisernetwork.org), a free service of the Kaiser Family Foundation. The webcast and related online resources will be available following the meeting at: <http://www.kaisernetwork.org/healthcast/hivimplementers2007>.

More information on the meeting can be found online at www.hivimplementers.com.

Information about the host of the meeting:

The Government of Rwanda's (GoR) response, in regard to the fight against HIV/AIDS, focuses on a multi-sector-based, multidisciplinary and integrated approach by bringing government authorities, the civil society, non-governmental organizations and development partners to work together in a spirit of a common planning, management and evaluation, to

ensure efficiency and high quality delivery of HIV/AIDS programs. For more information on the GoR, please visit www.gov.rw and for HIV/AIDS and health related issues, please visit the Ministry of Health's website (www.moh.gov.rw) and the National AIDS Control Commission website (www.cnls.gov.rw)

Information about the sponsors of the meeting:

The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is the largest global health initiative directed at a single disease that any nation has ever undertaken. If President Bush's FY 2008 budget request is approved, the Emergency Plan will exceed its original promise of \$15 billion over five years, with a total investment of \$18.3 billion in the global fight against HIV/AIDS over the first five years of PEPFAR. For more information about PEPFAR 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. The Global Fund has approved grants for 450 programs in 136 countries with a total commitment of US \$7 billion. 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. Coherent action on AIDS by the UN system is coordinated in countries through UN theme groups, and joint programs on AIDS. UNAIDS' cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Visit the UNAIDS web site at www.unaids.org.

UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), UNAIDS and other partners launched the Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS campaign in 2005. Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS targets four key areas: prevention of mother to child transmission; treatment of paediatric AIDS; education programs for prevention; and support for orphans and vulnerable children. UNICEF is on the ground in 155 countries and territories. For more information, please visit www.unicef.org.

The World Bank is engaged in the fight against AIDS, which is threatening to reverse the gains of development, to further its mission of fighting poverty. The World Bank provides comprehensive and sustainable financing for AIDS programs worldwide and to date has committed more than US \$2.7 billion. 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 on international health work and takes the lead in the United Nations system in the global health sector response to the AIDS epidemic. For more information, please visit www.who.int.

Information about the official advisory group:

The Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) is a global network for and by people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV). Its overall aim is to improve the quality of life of PLHIV. The work of GNP+ is guided by the Global Advocacy Agenda, which consists of three key areas: (i) Promoting universal access to HIV/AIDS care, treatment and prevention; (ii)

Combating stigma and discrimination; and (iii) Promoting the greater and more meaningful involvement of PLHIV. GNP+ is the only international network representing the diverse voices of all PLHIV. As a network based on emancipation and self-determination, GNP+ nurtured the development of six fully independent regional networks of PLHIV covering Africa (NAP+), Asia (APN+), the Caribbean (CRN+), Europe (GNP+ Europe), Latin America (REDLa+) and North America (GNP+ NA). Elected representatives from these networks form the GNP+ Board. For more information, please visit www.gnpplus.net

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