



MAKE POVERTY HISTORY

MORE AND BETTER AID TRADE JUSTICE CANCEL THE DEBT END CHILD POVERTY IN CANADA

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## News Release | Communiqué

**For immediate release**

### **FOUR STEPS FOR CANADA: STEPHEN LEWIS AND CANADIAN CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS DEMAND ACTION ON GLOBAL AIDS CRISIS**

*Platform presented to Prime Minister Stephen Harper in advance of XVI International AIDS Conference*

**TORONTO, August 9, 2006** — Stephen Lewis, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, today joined the Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG) and the Make Poverty History Campaign in calling on Prime Minister Stephen Harper to take decisive action in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

*The Global AIDS Crisis: Four Steps for Canada* is a civil society platform for action to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS globally and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. The platform has already been endorsed by more than 80 organizations across Canada, including the labour movement, faith groups, AIDS organizations, student groups, human rights advocates, and humanitarian and development organizations.

"Of the five million people who will be infected with HIV this year, 95 per cent live in low- and middle-income countries. The Canadian government has the moral responsibility to take action," Lewis said. "The world's eyes are on us. We must show that we are ready to lead."

"Canada and the other G8 countries have the means to do more in the global fight against AIDS, but leadership on these life-and-death issues continues to falter," said Joanne Csete, GTAG spokesperson and Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "Our platform is reasonable, realistic and achievable. What we need now is for Ottawa to stand up and lead the other G8 members by example. Will the Prime Minister take these four steps for Canada to help fulfill the G8's promise of universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment by 2010?"

An advance copy of the platform for action was presented to the Prime Minister last week. Here are the four steps Canada should take to do its part:

- **Pay our fair share of prevention and treatment in developing countries.**  
 Canada should commit to a binding timetable to bring its official development assistance to 0.7% of gross national income, double its research and development funding for HIV prevention tools such as microbicides and vaccines, and show leadership by contributing 5% of the total funding needed by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria over each of the next five years.
- **Invest in the public health care systems of developing countries.**  
 Canada should provide development assistance for public health care systems in developing countries, support greater retention of health care workers in developing countries, and implement policies to better train and retain health professionals in Canada as an alternative to recruiting health professionals from developing countries.
- **Cancel the debts of developing countries to free up resources to fight AIDS and poverty.**  
 Canada should promote the immediate and unconditional cancellation of 100% of the debt owed by countries burdened by AIDS, debt and poverty.
- **Follow through on commitments to make medicines affordable to developing countries.**  
 In 2004, Parliament unanimously passed the *Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa Act* to enable exports of lower-cost, generic medicines to developing countries. But no medicines have yet been sent. Canada should broker exploratory meetings between Canadian generic manufacturers and health ministries in developing countries, and remove unnecessary red tape that dissuades generic drug manufacturers and developing countries from using the law.

This call to action comes in advance of the opening of the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto, where more than 20,000 people from around the world will convene to address the global AIDS pandemic.

“Canada must take action on all of these fronts to fight HIV/AIDS and to bring low- and middle-income nations out of poverty,” said Gerry Barr, Co-chair of the Make Poverty History Campaign and President-CEO of the Canadian Council of International Co-operation. “Poverty fuels the AIDS pandemic and AIDS is devastating communities and local economies, relegating millions to live and die in poverty. Women and children are bearing the brunt of this pandemic — this vicious circle can and must be stopped.”

Lewis and GTAG members are asking Canadians to support the platform, already widely endorsed across Canadian civil society, by visiting [www.aidslaw.ca/gtag](http://www.aidslaw.ca/gtag) or <http://www.makepovertyhistory.ca/e/take-action/e-alerts/2006-07-21.html> and sending a letter to the Prime Minister and their local member of Parliament.

### **About the Global Treatment Access Group**

The Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG) is a working group of international development, human rights, humanitarian, and AIDS service organizations, trade unions and faith-based groups seeking to improve access to essential medicines and other aspects of HIV prevention and care, treatment and support for people living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries.

### **About the Make Poverty History Campaign**

The Make Poverty History Campaign is calling for more and better aid, trade justice, 100% cancellation of the debt owed by the poorest countries and an end to child poverty in Canada. More than 220,000 Canadians have endorsed the Campaign. Make Poverty History Canada is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty, the world's largest anti-poverty coalition made up of national campaigns in more than 70 countries.

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