Parallel Universe

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The 5,000 delegates at September's 11th International Conference on AIDS and STDs in Africa declared the epidemic's ravages on the continent an official "state of emergency," but they saved their harshest criticism for their nations' leaders, most of whom skipped the five-day event, which took place in Lukasa, Zambia.

The conference ended on a collaborative note with the announcement of the "International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa," an alliance of international organizations and African governments which will target HIV positive African teens and young adults at risk.

Days later, a truce in the South African-U.S. battle over compulsory licensing and parallel importing—which allow the use of generic (hence cheaper) versions of anti-HIV drugs—was called by Vice Presi-dent Al Gore and U.S. trade rep Charlene Barshefsky. South Africa vowed not to violate patent laws in exchange for U.S. support of the country's efforts to make affordable meds available. Though Gore denied reports that he had previously threatened South African President Thabo Mbeki with trade sanctions if trade laws were broken, the agreement clears the veep's campaign path of the ACT UPers and negative news dogging him all summer—at least for now, that is.

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