War on Drugs Fails Public Health, Says Richard Branson at AIDS 2014

July 22, 2014

Laws that criminalize intravenous drug use and homosexuality were big topics during day two of the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014), being held this week in Melbourne, Australia. Discussions focused on ways that such legislation impacts the HIV epidemic.

Specifically, delegates were told that the decriminalization of intravenous drug use worldwide was a key measure for ending global HIV/AIDS, according to an official press release from the conference, which is organized by the International AIDS Society. Speaking via a video link, Sir Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group and now a global drug commissioner, said that the war on drugs had failed in terms of public health outcomes.

Three symposiums were also held on Monday: One addressing youth leadership, another focusing in on how to engage with the science of HIV to improve access to treatment, and a third on HIV and sex workers, commissioned by The Lancet.

Other issues discussed on Monday included strengthening global health systems, surveying the barriers to and advancements in HIV prevention, promoting safe drinking water and sanitation for people living with HIV, overcoming gender equality, and improving the financial response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Tonight, the AIDS 2014 Mobilisation March and Candlelight Vigil will take place through Melbourne's city center to celebrate the triumphs of the community in the fight against the virus and to commemorate the 35 million people who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS-related illness. The six conference delegates who were killed in the Malaysian MH17 plane disaster last week will also be honored during the night's proceedings.

To read the full press release, click here.

To check out the rest of POZ's continuing coverage of AIDS 2014, click here.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/aids-2014-day-two-update-25926-7862