Fashion Icon Kenneth Cole Launches the “End AIDS Coalition”

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American fashion designer and longtime AIDS activist Kenneth Cole launched the End AIDS Coalition (EAC), a collaborative effort aimed at ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 and uniting leaders spanning fields such as science, policy, religion and activism. The coalition was announced at the 9th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Science in Paris (IAS 2017), according to an EAC press release.

According to the EAC website, the emerging generation of at-risk youth is much larger than the previous one. Even if current infection rates among at-risk youth remains constant, the number of new infections could double, driving the epidemic out of control.

“We are at a tipping point in the fight against AIDS, with a quickly closing window of opportunity,” Cole said in the press release. “If we do not act now and act together to gain control of this global epidemic, it may never be possible, and the costs in both funding and human lives would be catastrophic.”

EAC partners include the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research. By collaborating, EAC will:

- Focus the global AIDS response—linking research, resources and implementation—around one goal: to end the epidemic by 2030;

- Encourage the aggregation and analysis of data from the global AIDS response to identify barriers and encourage efficiencies, with a focus on specific populations and locations at risk (micro-epidemics);

- Inspire a movement to mobilize and engage the energy and creativity of the next generation, a critical step in achieving success over the next three to five years.

UNAIDS executive director Michel Sidibé welcomed the launch of the EAC. “Innovation and research are critical and must be the cornerstone of our efforts,” he said in a UNAIDS statement. “We cannot lose our sense of urgency. Without collaboration and investment in innovation, we will never be able to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.”

In 2018, the EAC will launch a global campaign to align and energize the global narrative with targeted advocacy. The goal is to spark a global movement and encourage everyone everywhere to recognize the challenge and be part of the solution.

Cole is a UNAIDS international goodwill ambassador; he is also the chairman of amfAR.

AIDS organizations, experts, scientists, clinicians, policymakers, faith leaders, businesses, activists and humanitarians are welcome to join the EAC.

The formation of EAC arrives after the UNAIDS report found that more than half of people living with HIV are taking meds. For more about that, click here.

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