



Leaders Welcome Advances in HIV Science While Warning of Growing Threats to Progress at 25th International AIDS Conference

7th known individual cured of HIV and a successful trial of a twice-yearly HIV prevention shot announced at conference against backdrop of rising global authoritarianism, attacks on science, and threats to global health funding

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More than 10,000 participants are expected to attend AIDS 2024, [the 25th International AIDS Conference](#), the world's largest gathering of people living with, affected by, and working on HIV, taking place in person in Munich, Germany, and virtually from 22 to 26 July.

"We've seen incredible breakthroughs at AIDS 2024, including a new case of long-term HIV remission and a promising twice-yearly injection to prevent HIV," Sharon Lewin, IAS President and AIDS 2024 International Co-Chair, said. "While these advances are cause to celebrate, science doesn't happen in a vacuum. All around the world, regressive policies, attacks on human rights, the spread of misinformation, cuts to global health funding, and waning trust in international institutions are roadblocks to progress. To end HIV as a threat to public health and individual well-being, we need an evidence-based HIV response and a political climate that respects science."

The theme of AIDS 2024 calls on the global community to Put people first!

"Putting people first means that whether in the design of clinical trials or implementing new policies and programmes, people living with and affected by HIV must be not just beneficiaries but actors driving our efforts," Lewin said.

UNAIDS underscores urgency in driving efforts to achieve global targets

Citing the 2023 UNAIDS Global AIDS update, titled [The Urgency of Now, AIDS at a Crossroads](#), UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima shared that despite global targets to reduce new HIV acquisitions to below 370,000 by 2025, the number remains more than three times higher, at 1.3 million new acquisitions in 2023.

"The new data UNAIDS released earlier today shows that success or failure will be determined by

the actions taken this year," Byanyima said. "We are calling on leaders to take three critical steps: Resource the response; get long-acting treatment and prevention options to all low- and middle-income countries; and break down the discrimination and stigma that are pushing the most marginalised people away from health care. We know the path that ends AIDS but we have no time to wait."

Financing expert warns of threats to global HIV funding

Chris Collins, President and CEO of Friends of the Global Fight Against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, spoke about the critical role of disease-specific funding programmes in the current political environment.

"For over 20 years, American leaders across political parties have come together, recognizing the critical need to end the AIDS epidemic. Misinformation held up the five-year reauthorization of PEPFAR this year, but bipartisan commitment to the program remains solid in the United States," said Collins. "Lawmakers know that the Global Fund and PEPFAR are saving millions of lives and if we backtrack on our commitments on AIDS, TB and malaria, the immediate result would be disease resurgence and the squandered opportunity to end the most deadly infectious diseases."

Ukrainian public health leader urges action in eastern Europe and central Asia

AIDS 2024 includes a special focus on eastern Europe and central Asia, a region with one of the fastest-growing HIV epidemics in the world.

"While most other regions around the globe have managed to stabilise their HIV epidemics, in eastern Europe and central Asia, it is rapidly increasing," Andriy Klepikov, AIDS 2024 Regional Co-Chair said. "Only half of people living in our region are on antiretroviral therapy, nowhere near the global target of 95%. At the root of the region's epidemic are drug use, stigma and harmful policies – exacerbated by violent conflict.

"In my country, Ukraine, public health services are delivered against a soundtrack of constant air sirens as we struggle to restore basic access to health care since the Russian invasion. Progress will require major change and innovation, removing policy barriers and respecting the rights of the communities most affected by HIV."

PEPFAR leader calls for sustained momentum in global HIV response

Ambassador John Nkengasong, U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Senior Bureau Official for the State Department Bureau of Global Health Security and Diplomacy, cautioned against complacency at this critical juncture.

"I am honoured to be here this week with so many friends and colleagues working together to end HIV and AIDS as a public health threat," Nkengasong said. "While we have accomplished much, now is not the time to sit back; we must sustain the gains we have all worked so hard to make against this pandemic and accelerate our efforts to end it. I am confident that the expertise,

experience, and energy that is here in Munich this week will result in even more invigorated efforts to reach our collective goals.”

Ugandan advocate shares real-world impact of harmful policies

The opening session included a testimonial from Jay Mulucha, Fem Alliance Uganda Executive Director on the impact of Uganda’s 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, which outlaws sexual relations among members of the same sex and imposes the death penalty to “serious homosexual acts”.

“In Uganda, despite there being rollbacks on some of the harsher policies under the Anti-Homosexuality Act, there remains a discrepancy between these changes in policies and what is actually being implemented on the ground. The violations are still happening, including denial of access to healthcare services and housing, despite the government claiming that this situation has changed,” Mulucha said.

“The sanctions and penalties being placed by the international community on the Ugandan government are working, but the lifting of these sanctions needs to be contingent not on changes in policy but on evidence of changes in implementation. For this, you need to listen to the communities and hear what we are saying. We are still suffering and need your support more than ever, so the funding that is being denied to the government should be funnelled directly into LGBTIQ organizations and communities in Uganda.”

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