

stop AIDS campaign

The Stop AIDS Campaign is the campaigning arm of the UK Consortium on AIDS and International Development – a coalition of over 90 NGOs and Trade Unions promoting effective responses to the HIV pandemic.

MP Briefing and Call for Action: March 20th 2007

Why are MPs being lobbied today?

On 26th and 27th March, the G8 Development Ministers will meet in Berlin. By working with his counterparts at this meeting, Secretary of State for International Development Hilary Benn can help set a bold and challenging agenda on HIV & AIDS ahead of the G8 Heads of State meeting in June, and take the actions needed to ensure the G8 promise of Universal Access to HIV Treatment by 2010 is kept.

The voice of parliamentarians in achieving this is crucial. Since the launch of the Stop AIDS Campaign in 2003, MPs have played an important role in pushing for UK leadership on this issue. Now, after the high profile promises of 2005, MPs must use their influence to hold the government to account. Thousands of people have taken action on this issue since last September alone, and the call for Universal Access clearly represents the broad based concerns of people across the UK.

What is the issue?

In 2005 G8 countries promised to achieve Universal Access to HIV Treatment by 2010. In 2006 all UN members committed to achieving Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care by 2010. But the world is already dangerously behind in reaching its targets and the need for urgent action is clear. As a result of failures so far, almost 3 million people died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2006.

- With less than 3 years left until the target date, more than 75% of those urgently needing HIV treatment are not receiving it.
- In 2007 there is an estimated global funding gap of \$8.1bn between what is needed to tackle HIV and AIDS, and what is being provided.
- Over 4 million extra health workers will be needed in developing countries to ensure that HIV treatment and services can be delivered to all.
- Essential life-saving treatments (such as Kaletra and Viread) remain under patent and are many times more expensive than generic alternatives would be. If just 10% of patients in Africa switched to patented second-line medicines (which they will have to at some stage) the continent's HIV drugs bill would double.

To tackle these issues, what the G8 countries must do in 2007 is:

- 1) Reduce the price of life-saving treatment by removing trade barriers that prevent the production and distribution of generic medicines.
- 2) Agree a long-term, comprehensive funding plan for Universal Access, ensuring enough money is available to tackle the pandemic.
- 3) Strengthen health systems through sustainable financing and addressing the shortage of health workers.
- 4) Support women and children affected by HIV and AIDS, including achieving Universal Access to services preventing Mother to Child Transmission.

For an effective and comprehensive response, *all* of these issues must be tackled by the G8 in 2007 and reflected in commitments made in the final communiqué. More information can be found in the Stop AIDS Campaign briefing paper '*How the G8 can Keep the Promise of Universal Access by 2010*'.

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What you can do:

- 1) **Email Hilary Benn today** urging him to ensure that the G8 Development Ministers undertake the actions overleaf to ensure the achievement of Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care by 2010 at their meeting in Berlin. Tell him that his leadership is needed to press this crucial issue.
- 2) **Write to Tony Blair** urging him to ensure the above actions are committed to and outlined at the final G8 Heads of State Summit in June.
- 3) **Table an 'Oral Question'** to the Department of International Development, to be answered by Hilary Benn in Parliament on 28th March 2007, to feedback on what he achieved at the Development Ministers meeting (which would have finished the previous day).

Suggested questions to table or ask as supplementary questions:

'What efforts did the Secretary of State make at the recent G8 Development Ministers meeting to ensure that meaningful progress is made on achieving the target of universal access to HIV treatment, prevention and care by 2010 during this year's German presidency of the G8, and what outcomes can he report?'

'What efforts did the Secretary of State make at the G8 Development Ministers meeting to garner international action to reduce the prices of essential medicines by tackling the patent barriers that restrict the production of generic medicines, and what outcomes can he report?'

'Does the Secretary of State support the formulation of a comprehensive, long-term financing plan for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care, and what efforts did he make at the G8 Development Ministers meeting to mobilise sufficient resources to tackle the pandemic, and what outcomes can he report?'

- 4) **Sign EDM 107 on Universal Access to HIV Treatment by 2010 if you have not already done so.**

EDM 107: UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT BY 2010 TARGET

That this House welcomes the UK Government's role in 2005 in establishing a global commitment to achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care by 2010; believes that keeping this promise requires a G8 funding plan fully to finance the global effort, investment in strong health systems, and genuinely affordable essential medicines; recognises that generic versions of essential medicines are an effective and necessary way to reduce the prices of key drugs; notes, however, that intellectual property rights remain a key barrier to the production and export of generic versions; and believes strongly that the UK Government should show international leadership, including at the 2007 G8 Summit, to improve access to generic medicines by proactively supporting the full use of TRIPS flexibilities, working to simplify mechanisms for producing and exporting key drugs and opposing conditions in bilateral trade agreements which undermine access to treatment.