

COC Permanent Member Consultation

International AIDS Conference Future Directions Project

February 28, 2005
Toronto, Canada

Summary

The group discussed several ideas for change at the International AIDS Conference, including basing sessions on the World Economic Forum model, increasing the focus on accountability, and expanding the role of science. A proposal to introduce daily themes was discussed at some length, and the group felt this concept could be implemented at the Toronto conference. There was also discussion of the likely “hot topics” of conversation in August 2006 (during the Conference). The group felt that there should be some assessment of the multiple different AIDS conferences now held around the world.

Action Steps

- Organize a small group meeting to discuss next steps on the “daily themes” idea.
- Prepare a list of commitments made at the Bangkok Conference.
- Research the World Economic Forum as a model for organization of sessions.
- Prepare inventory of AIDS conferences, listing sponsors and co-organizers.

Detailed Comments

A lot of the conference works, but there is also a growing sense of cacophony. The information flow needs to be streamlined.

The WEF model: The World Economic Forum is a model of how to organize productive sessions. There are policy debates and moderators are well prepared; they get the dialogue going. Presentations are no more than three minutes. There are no podiums, just chairs for speakers. Sessions are small. Choosing the right people to run the sessions is critical. The WEF approach requires a great deal of work in advance. At Bangkok, the Leadership Program tried to use some of this model.

Daily themes: There should be themes that integrate across tracks. We should generate agendas for the global community and accountability on those agendas. Key issues could be identified at the opening and closing night ceremonies. There could be a theme for each day: a barrier, challenge, or area that would benefit from in-depth discussion. The theme would be addressed in plenaries, debates, and in sessions in the regular tracks. There could be regional reports on the theme. Perhaps different organizations would take ownership of setting up the theme days. After the plenary the media could be invited to a moderated discussion on the theme, and the plenary speakers should also come to the global village. Perhaps plenary speakers should be told to expect a day-long commitment. Rapporteur teams would synthesize discussions from the various sessions during the day and write up daily reports identifying areas of consensus, those needing further discussion, and issues for moving forward. These reports could go in the daily conference newsletter and be reported back during the closing ceremony. Nominations for themes could be posted on the Future Directions web site for people to give comments.

The daily theme concept could be implemented at Toronto. The next step is to form a small group that can discuss how to move forward with the concept, and what the themes might be. The small group should include representatives from UNAIDS, ICASO, the Executive Director and President of IAS, and the SPC. A document should be prepared on the proposal in advance of the April Joint Programme Committee meeting. (Chris Collins offered to staff the small group.) The JPC will need a sense of ownership of the theme day idea.

Accountability: At Toronto there could be a report on commitments made at Bangkok, and there could be a special session or two for reporting on what has happened in the intervening two years. We could review the status of UNGASS commitments and the 3 by 5 initiative. Perhaps the AIDS Accountability Project could play some role. We should announce that at the 2008 conference there will be a report on the status of commitments made in 2006.

Representation: Industry and large NGOs are not now represented on the COC, and we should consider ways to include them more directly in conference planning.

Increasing the presence of science: Have some of the senior scientists in AIDS (like Robert Gallo, Luc Montagnier and Jim Curran) make major addresses and meet with scientists. Announce their attendance in advance to encourage scientists to come. Have skills building for scientists, including mentoring on writing abstracts and making interesting presentations. Toronto will be the 25th anniversary of the identification of the epidemic, and we could have a scientific “looking back, looking forward” theme. Make scientific sessions more interactive. Have more ‘popular science’ sessions that would be a bridge between different constituencies. Bring people together on common issues: scientists, clinical researchers, and community members.

Hot topics in August 2006: *What will everyone be discussing at Toronto?*

- Was the 3 by 5 goal achieved and what did we learn from the effort?
- New research results for Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis, circumcision, and treatment of HSV.
- Rationalizing treatment delivery and approaches to achieve equity in treatment access.
- More detailed discussion of the issues involved in ARV delivery and treatment scale up.
- Where is the funding going, and what is the absorptive capacity of recipients?
- Status of Three Ones: how successful have countries and donors been in harmonizing program planning and aid?
- United States policy in general and infection rates in the United States, particularly among African Americans.
- Declines in HIV prevalence in some regions (perhaps including Sub-Saharan Africa).
- Trade policy, generics, and the impact on availability of first and second line therapy.
- Children's access to treatment, and research on pediatric therapies.

We should have long-term survivors in the opening and closing ceremonies as a way of marking the 25th anniversary of AIDS.

Rationalizing AIDS conferences. There are multiple international and regional AIDS meetings. A map of these conferences, including their sponsors and co-organizers, is needed. We should ask how these different conferences could be organized to provide the maximum benefit to the field.