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1. DOMESTIC NEWS BRIEFS

PUTIN DISCUSSES HIV/AIDS IN FEDERAL ASSEMBLY ADDRESS

During his annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly, on April 25, 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin said the HIV/AIDS epidemic was a priority in the sphere of international cooperation. According to the president, “We are also ready to take part in an effective partnership with all countries in order to find solutions to global problems—from finding effective ways to protect the environment to space exploration, and from preventing global man-made disasters to addressing the threat of the spread of AIDS. And of course we are also ready to join efforts to fight challenges to the modern world order such as international terrorism, cross-border crime and drug trafficking.” The president had previously mentioned HIV/AIDS in his annual address to the Federal Assembly in May 2003. Shortly after that speech, in September 2003, the issue of fighting HIV/AIDS was for the first time included in the agenda of a U.S.–Russia summit, held in Camp David (USA). Putin also mentioned the epidemic during his speech at the 58th session of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2003.

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LEGISLATORS’ LETTER TO G8 LEADERS DELIVERED

In April 2005, Russian President Vladimir Putin and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair received copies of a letter co-signed by leaders of Russian and British national parliamentary groups on HIV/AIDS. The letter urged G8 leaders to focus attention on the issue of HIV/AIDS epidemics in Eurasia and to include international cooperation in the fight against AIDS on the agendas of the upcoming G8 summits in the UK (July 6-8, 2005) and the following year in Russia. The letter was co-signed by Arthur Chilingarov, deputy chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation Federal Assembly, and Neil Garrard, member of the UK Parliament and chairman of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS.

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AD HOC GROUP ESTABLISHED TO DEVELOP LEGISLATIVE AND METHODOLOGICAL DOCUMENT ON HIV/AIDS

as of April 25, 2005, a total of 317,981 people in the Russian Federation were officially registered as living with HIV/AIDS; of them, 1,346 people have had AIDS (according to the Federal Research and Methodological Center for HIV/AIDS) • 4 out of 5 Russians living with HIV/AIDS are young people under the age of 30 • 39.4 million people are living with HIV/AIDS worldwide; 2.2 million of them are children under 15 • the number of people living with HIV/AIDS increased by 4.9 million worldwide last year (2004) • 3.1 million individuals died of AIDS in 2004 alone • worldwide, one of every six individuals dying of AIDS is a child

On April 1, 2005, the RF Ministry of Health Care and Social Development established an ad hoc group to develop legislative and methodological documents on diagnostics, treatment, epidemic control and surveillance. The objective of the group is to increase the efficiency of fighting HIV/AIDS in the Russian Federation and to foster the implementation of the loan agreement between the federal government and the World Bank to finance the project “Prevention, Diagnostics, Care of Tuberculosis and AIDS.” The ad hoc group includes representatives from the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development, the Russian Federal Service for Monitoring and Protection of Consumers’ Rights and Social Welfare (*Roszdraznadzor*), the Federal AIDS Center, the World Health Organization, UNAIDS and several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in the implementation of the state strategy in fighting HIV/AIDS. The group is chaired by Ruslan Khalfin, director of the Department for Development of Medical Care and Resorts of the RF Ministry for Health Care and Social Development.

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RESOLUTION DRAFTED TO PERMIT ADOPTIONS BY HIV-POSITIVE PEOPLE

In April, the Coordination Council on HIV/AIDS issues, which involves representatives of eight Russian ministries and 10 NGOs, developed and presented a draft resolution that would give people living with HIV/AIDS the right to adopt children. If approved, this resolution would overturn Article 127 of the Family Code, which holds that the HIV-positive status of any adopting parent is a reason for official refusal of adoption. The amendment was drafted by Gennady Onischenko, chief state sanitary physician of the Russian Federation. He said, “The existing norm violates both the rights of HIV-positive people and children themselves.”

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CHIEF SANITARY PHYSICIAN ISSUES DECREE URGING IMPROVEMENT IN HIV PREVENTION AND TREATMENT EFFORTS

In the decree No. 16 of April 25, 2005, “On Supplementary Measures to Fight the Spread of HIV Infection in the Russian Federation,” the chief state sanitary physician of the Russian Federation revealed a number of “serious defects in administrative issues, organization of preventive measures and work against the HIV/AIDS epidemic that do not allow for substantial improvement and success in fighting HIV/AIDS.” According to the official, Gennady Onischenko, the most acute problems involve lack of attention to HIV/AIDS on the part of leaders of many regional governments; unsatisfactory organization of efforts to prevent and treat drug dependence; a shortage of specialized educational programs as well as harm reduction programs and other contemporary HIV-prevention methods and techniques targeting the most vulnerable groups; a lack of efficient measures to ensure access to HIV/AIDS treatment; non-fulfillment of the federal law guaranteeing access to free treatment, diagnostics and support to prevent HIV infections; a lack of prevention resources for pregnant women; insufficient participation of the media, particularly TV channels with governmental shareholdings, in public awareness campaigns; an increase in the number of HIV-infected individuals in the penitentiary system; and a shortage of government funds to ensure the provision of free treatment in accordance with the current law. Onischenko recommended the establishment of a high-level federal commission with responsibility to consider ways to more adequately address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Russia. He also suggested increasing the amount of budget funds allocated to the Anti-HIV/AIDS Sub-program to the level of 812 million rubles (about \$28 million) in 2006 in order to ensure the provision of free

antiretroviral treatment (ART) to all who need it; reducing the federal government's budget fees and customs duties on antiretroviral medicines; and creating a national HIV/AIDS prevention program (“*Concept*”) to be implemented throughout the education system. (*The full text of the decree [in Russian] can be downloaded from the website of the Federal Service for Monitoring and Protection of Consumers' Rights and Social Welfare: http://www.gsen.ru/doc/postan/ps_16_2005.html.*)

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HEAD OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE FOR SURVEILLANCE IN THE SPHERE OF HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HOSTS U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE

During a visit to Moscow in April 2005, U.S. State Secretary Condoleezza Rice discussed HIV prevention and treatment issues in Russia during a meeting with the head of the Federal Agency for Surveillance in the Spheres of Health Care and Social Development, Ramil Khabriev, and representatives of the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Part of the discussion centered on provision of and quality of antiretroviral medicines in the country. According to Khabriev, all major medicines for AIDS therapy have been tested and approved in the Russian Federation. A total of 54 drugs were already registered, 36 of which were imported and 18 produced domestically; furthermore, he said, 33 medicines (27 export and six domestic) were in the process of undergoing required pre-registration testing. As part of an effort to speed up availability and increase supply, meeting participants considered the possible relocation of production of original medicines to Russia itself—and related issues regarding GMP quality standards should this take place. (This possibility had been discussed previously at an RF Security Council session on April 16, 2005.) In addition, participants at the Rice meeting agreed to seek further cooperation in HIV/AIDS treatment issues, with U.S. officials suggesting the possibility of using existing research and scientific laboratories to produce HIV diagnostic systems and vaccines. Both parties agreed that such meetings should be held on a regular basis.

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RUSSIAN DELEGATION VISITS WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK TO DISCUSS POSSIBILITIES FOR COOPERATION IN HIV/AIDS

A high-level delegation of Russian political and business leaders visited Washington, D.C. and New York City for three days in June 2005 to meet with U.S. government officials and business and civic leaders to discuss ways to strengthen U.S.-Russia cooperation on HIV/AIDS, as per an agreement reached by the Russian and U.S. presidents during a meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia in February. The Russian delegation was led by Valery Zubov, first deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Credit Organizations and Financial Markets and former governor of Krasnoyarsk Kray. The delegation also included Vladimir Golovnev, co-chairman of the Russian NGO “Business Russia” and president of the Association of Textile and Light-Industry Enterprises, and Dmitry Blyumkin, marketing director of MTV–Russia.

The delegation visited the White House, the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services, the U.S. State Department, U.S. Congress, the National Security Council and a methadone treatment clinic. During the visit, a special dinner reception with more than 130 guests was hosted by the American actor Richard Gere in New York.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION ADDS TWO KEY DRUG-DEPENDENCE THERAPIES TO OFFICIAL APPROVED LIST

WHO officials announced in July 2005 that methadone and buprenorphine would be added to the organization's Model List of Essential Medicines. The two drugs are currently used in many countries as part of substitution therapy programs for drug-dependent individuals. Their inclusion on WHO's list will likely boost acceptance of methadone and buprenorphine among those who have long believed that such therapies are ineffective in reducing drug dependence or represent acceptance of illegal drug use. Neither drug is currently legal for any purpose in Russia, a situation that harm reduction advocates have long tried to change. (*Additional information about WHO's Model List of Essential Medicines may be found online at <http://www.who.int/medicines/organization/par/edl/expcom14/expertcomm14.shtm>.)*

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2. SPECIAL ACTIONS AND EVENTS**GLOBAL AIDS QUILT DISPLAYED IN MOSCOW**

From April 22 through April 26, the Global AIDS Memorial Quilt was displayed at the Paveletsky Railway Terminal Station in Moscow. The quilt, which was created in the memory of people who have lost their lives to HIV/AIDS, came to Moscow on its way around the world. It is intended to raise awareness about the disease. Prior to arriving in Moscow, the quilt was displayed in 10 other Russian cities starting from the Far East. The exposition was organized by the Russian Media Partnership to Combat HIV/AIDS and the Russian Movement *Imena* ("Names"). Those participating in the opening ceremony included Lisa Vershbow, the U.S. ambassador's wife, who read aloud the names of U.S. citizens memorialized on the quilt.

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"STOP AIDS" AWARENESS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

"HIV/AIDS Affects Everyone" is the key message of a series of new informational materials within the "Stop SPID" ("Stop AIDS") awareness campaign, which was launched on April 25. The materials feature real-life stories of two Russian young people living with HIV/AIDS, Sasha and Alex, who agreed to serve as the faces of the public awareness campaign. They said that "just like many people their age," they never thought that the HIV/AIDS epidemic would affect them personally. The new campaign in Russian media is part of a three-year public awareness program with a \$200 million budget—which represents the total value of advertising revenue that participating media outlets agreed to provide for free.

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INTERNATIONAL AIDS MEMORY DAY MARKED ON MAY 15

Several events were held around the country to mark International AIDS Memory Day on May 15. This day is celebrated traditionally on the third Sunday of May in memory of people who have died of AIDS

as part of an effort to raise awareness and encourage tolerance and understand for those living with the virus. This was the 14th year that the day had been marked in Russia.

In Irkutsk, Moscow, Orenburg, Perm, Rostov-na-Don, Samara, Tver and Voronezh, regional NGOs hosted the action *Most Pamyati* (“Memory Bridge”) with the support of international and Russian organizations and companies. Public services and prayers were organized in churches in a wide number of cities. Activities in individual cities and regions included the following:

- In **Irkutsk** (a region in which more than 18,700 cases of HIV infection are officially registered), the Global AIDS Quilt was displayed and the regional AIDS center held an “open house” to encourage voluntary HIV testing.
- In **Tomsk** (more than 800 cases of HIV officially registered in the region), a public service was held in a church and volunteers from the Siberia AIDS Assistance provided consultations and information for youth downtown.
- In **Samara** (more than 22,600 officially registered cases of HIV in the region), activities included a roundtable discussion on HIV/AIDS, the launch of the Positive Approach campaign and an exposition of children’s artwork titled “HIV/AIDS in Children’s Eyes.”
- In **Tyumen** (more than 6,800 officially registered cases of HIV in the region), the regional Center for HIV/AIDS Fight and Prevention held a competition for essays and papers written about HIV/AIDS issue by students from vocational schools and colleges.
- In **Magnitogorsk** (more than 14,700 officially registered HIV cases have been noted in the Chelyabinsk oblast), a mass action was organized to draw attention to the spread of drug use and HIV infection, titled “Magnitogorsk, Make Your Choice for Future!”
- In **Nizhny Novgorod** (more than 800 officially registered cases of HIV in the region), lilac trees were planted near the regional AIDS Center in memory of local residents who had died of AIDS, one tree for each person.
- In **Krasnoyarsk** (some 5,800 officially registered cases of HIV in the region), the regional Department for Health Care announced a contest for journalists and other members of the media for the best and most effective output on the issue of HIV/AIDS prevention.
- In **Rostov-na-Don**, a meeting was held downtown under the slogan “From Memories to Actions.” People gathered near the public library to light 443 candles, one each for every person recorded as dying of AIDS in the region, and to read their names aloud.
- In **Uliyanovsk** (more than 6,600 officially registered cases of HIV in the region), a public awareness campaign, “Choose the Future Without AIDS,” was launched. It is intended to continue through November.

On the eve of International AIDS Memory Day, activists from the FrontAIDS movement, which aims to defend the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS, blocked the entrance to the RF Ministry of Health Care and Social Development in Moscow as well as a nearby street, Neglinka. They called for the government to undertake immediate measures to solve the problem of lack of access to HIV/AIDS treatment by most of those in need.

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3. REGIONS

TV TELETHON LAUNCHED TO RAISE AWARENESS OF HIV/AIDS

A TV telethon titled “Time to Live” will be held from May to December 2005 in 11 Russian cities: Barnaul, Irkutsk, Kazan, Krasnoyarsk, Nizhny Novgorod, St. Petersburg, Tomsk, Tver, Ulan Ude, Ulianovsk and Volgograd. Regional telethons will be hosted by Vladimir Pozner, Elena Khanga and other well-known artists, and will involve regional officials, experts, medical workers, educators, journalists and representatives of NGOs. The project is aimed at drawing attention to the problem of HIV/AIDS in Russia.

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MOSCOW CITY DUMA INITIATES CONTROVERSIAL HIV/AIDS AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The Moscow City Duma initiated a massive advertising campaign focusing on HIV prevention and awareness. The campaign, with a total budget of 25 million rubles, includes posters and billboards with messages such as “A Healthy Family is the Best Protection Against AIDS” and “There is no such thing as safe sex.” The campaign was immediately controversial. A number of international and Russian NGOs, including AIDS Foundation East–West, FOCUS MEDIA Foundation, and the Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS, published an open letter in April outlining their concerns with the campaign’s messages. They noted that some of the messages emphasized abstinence and seemed to indicate that no other appropriate prevention strategy existed. Such messages, critics claimed, contradicted longstanding HIV education and prevention efforts focusing equally on “safer sex,” including the use of condoms for those who are sexually active. Those signing the letter said they were worried that seemingly conflicting messages about HIV prevention would confuse young people and lead to more risky behavior.

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FIRST PUBLIC HEARING ON AIDS AND DRUG DEPENDENCE HELD IN KRASNOYARSK

On July 4, a hearing titled “AIDS and Drug Addiction: Myths, Reality and Actions” was held in Krasnoyarsk. The hearing was co-organized by the regional Interagency Commission to Address Drug Use, Alcoholism and AIDS, the Krasnoyarsk regional AIDS Center and TPAA. A TPAA policy brief, “HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Krasnoyarsk Kray,” was developed and published for the hearing. (*More information about the hearing may be found online at <http://www.tpaa.net/events/?id=339>.*)

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4. MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

MOSCOW: RUSSIAN BUSINESS SUMMIT ON HIV/AIDS

A meeting titled “Developing Government–Private Sector Partnership to Fight AIDS in Russia” was held in Moscow on March 30, and representatives from more than 30 leading Russian companies attended. Speakers included Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Zhukov; RF Minister of Health Care and Social Development Mikhail Zurabov; Chairman of the Coordination Council of Unions of Entrepreneurs of Russia (CCUER) Alexander Shokhin; World Bank Senior Vice President for Human Development Jean-Louis Sarbib; and U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation Alexander Vershbow (.

Zhukov stressed that fighting HIV/AIDS is an urgent issue, noting, “The spread of AIDS has gone beyond the limits of a medical problem—it has now become an issue of the nation’s strategic, social and economic security.”

According to Zurabov, as a result of negotiations held by his ministry with a number of leading international pharmaceutical companies, the average cost per year of ART for an individual patient in Russia will soon fall to about \$3,000, a significant drop from the current cost of about \$10,000 a year. This price reduction may help increase the number of people receiving ART; currently, between 500 and 700 people in Russia are on ART through the government health system, yet the total number of those in need exceeds 15,000. *(More information about the Summit may be found online at http://www.tpaa.ru/events_033005_bl_release_ru.html, the website of TPAА, one of the organizers of the Summit, or http://www.itogi.ru/Paper2005.nsf/Article/Itoji_2005_04_05_12_5941.html, the website of the magazine Itogi [“Results”].)*

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MOSCOW: MEETING WITH OFFICIALS FROM UNAIDS AND NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES TO DISCUSS JOINT EFFORTS TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS

On April 1, a two-day expanded meeting was held in Moscow with participants including government ministers from NIS countries and representatives from the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The meeting, co-organized by the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was aimed at identifying immediate measures to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the NIS region, including coordination of efforts and developing means to increase the efficiency of resources.

Among the ministers attending from several NIS countries were those with responsibility for health care, law enforcement, and social and economic development. According to most international observers, all NIS countries are at a crucial point in their efforts to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS, with immediate action necessary to forestall an even more devastating future epidemic. Between 2002 and 2004, for example, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the region increased by 1.4 million; furthermore, 80% of all infected to date are thought to be young people under the age of 30. Despite this recent surge, most NIS countries are still likely to have a so-called window of possibility, which means that their HIV/AIDS epidemics began only recently and can still be halted by the introduction of efficient, realistic measures. For instances, experts recommend undertaking urgent, non-coercive

measures to reduce drug use among young people and scaling up access among people living with HIV/AIDS to ART, care and support services.

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MOSCOW: ALL-RELIGION COMMITTEE ON AIDS PREVENTION MEETS TO CONSIDER COLLABORATION TO FIGHT EPIDEMIC

A new committee comprising religious leaders from throughout Russia was established at a conference in Moscow on April 18–19. During the gathering, titled “Governmental, Religious and Non-governmental Organizations in Solving the HIV/AIDS Problem: Prospects for Interaction,” more than 200 representatives of public sector agencies, medical institutions, NGOs and various religious organizations met to discuss ways to collaborate in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Among various recommendations, participants agreed that the committee would organize training seminars and consultations on legal issues and establish local advisory and support services, hotlines and work projects in the penitentiary system. Delegates of the conference appealed to Russia’s Inter-religion Council to include the AIDS epidemic issue in the Council’s work agenda.

On April 15, Minister of Health Care and Social Development Mikhail Zurabov and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis II signed an agreement calling for greater collaboration between the ministry and the Russian Orthodox Church (the Moscow Patriarch Office). Providing help and support to people living with HIV/AIDS and prevention the further spread of HIV are among the most important goals outlined within the collaboration agreement.

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VORONEZH: INTERREGIONAL CONFERENCE ON CROSS-SECTOR INTEGRATION

On May 18–19, an interregional conference titled “Developing the System of Cross-sector Interaction between Various Organizations and Public Services to Counteract the Contemporary HIV/AIDS Epidemic” was held in Voronezh. Participants included professionals and representatives from various organizations such as the RF Federal Service for Surveillance in the Sphere of Consumer Rights and the Open Health Institute as well as leaders of harm reduction projects from Belgorod, Kursk, Lipetsk, Moscow, Penza, Voronezh and other regions. The conference was co-organized by the All-Russia Harm Reduction Network, AntiAIDS Center, and the Voronezh branch of Russia’s Business Women Confederation.

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5. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

GLOBAL FUND TO FIGHT AIDS, TUBERCULOSIS AND MALARIA (GFATM)

In June 2005, the GFATM and a Russian government entity signed an agreement providing \$34.2 million over two years for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention efforts. The total amount of the funding request over five years was \$120.5 million; additional disbursements bringing the overall total to this amount are contingent upon GFATM approval based on developments during the initial two-year phase. The

Principal Recipient of the new grant is a government agency, the Russian Health Care Foundation (RHCF), which is also implementing a World Bank loan. The primary goal of the grant is to provide ART to those in need and support services to vulnerable groups. According to the GFATM, members of these groups, which include injecting drug users and sex workers, constitute over 85 percent of diagnosed cases of HIV/AIDS in Russia. Like the World Bank's loan, the GFATM grant is primarily intended to help strengthen HIV-related infrastructure and training of specialists. A major part of the grant will later be used to cover costs of medicines for ART. The GFATM anticipates that the grant will boost the number of people with HIV/AIDS who are receiving ART to 15,500, from fewer than 1,000 now, in 14 regions over the first two years of the program. The number receiving ART through GFATM assistance is expected to rise to 75,000 individuals by the fifth year of the grant, assuming subsequent disbursements are approved.

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NIZHNY NOVGOROD: WORLD BANK PROVIDES OBLAST WITH GRANT FOR DIAGNOSTICS AND PREVENTION

In April, Nizhegorodsky Oblast receives a grant totaling \$70,000 for diagnostics and prevention of HIV/AIDS under the auspices of the World Bank's program to prevent HIV/AIDS. This grant is part of the bank's \$150 million loan to the Russian Federation government over five years beginning in 2003. The main goals of the loan are to boost HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis prevention and treatment in the country. Nizhegorodsky Oblast also received a 500,000 pound (\$900,000) grant from the UK Department for International Development; this grant is intended to support a two-year program to fight HIV/AIDS in the Nizhny Novgorod region.

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NEW YORK: CLINTON FOUNDATION PROVIDES \$10 MILLION FOR ART FOR CHILDREN IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The William J. Clinton Foundation, which was founded by the former U.S. president, announced in April that its HIV/AIDS Initiative would deliver \$10 million to cover ART costs for children in developing countries. The funds will help provide medicines for 10,000 children living with HIV/AIDS in poor countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. By the end of 2006, the Clinton Foundation and the UN Children's Foundation (UNICEF) hope to have more than 60,000 children on ART under their joint program. Overall, the Foundation's HIV/AIDS Initiative seeks to provide medical care and ART medicines to 2 million individuals worldwide by the end of 2008. *(Additional information about the Clinton Foundation's HIV/AIDS Initiative may be found online at <http://www.clintonfoundation.org>.)*

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KYRGYZSTAN: GERMANY PROVIDES GRANT FOR HIV PREVENTION

The German government has provided a 3.5 million euro (\$4.3 million) grant to the government of Kyrgyzstan to help bolster its HIV prevention efforts. Most of the funds are earmarked for the purchase

of medical and laboratory equipment. According to KyrgyzInfo news agency, currently there are about 680 individuals officially registered as living with HIV/AIDS in Kyrgyzstan.

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TAJIKISTAN: COLLABORATIVE GRANT FROM UNAIDS AND THE GFATM

In April, the Health Ministry of Tajikistan received 5 cars, 9 personal computers and other office equipment from the GFATM and UNAIDS to support the government's HIV prevention efforts.

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6. INTERNATIONAL NEWS

MEETING REVIEWS PROGRESS OF 2001 UNGASS DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS

On June 2, 2005, a high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS was held at UN headquarters in New York on June 2, 2005 in the framework of the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly. The meeting aimed to review progress made in the implementation of goals set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which was adopted by participating nations at a UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS four years earlier. The 2005 gathering consisted of two plenary meetings and five roundtable discussions. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan pointed out that despite the “significant” response that had been achieved over the past four years in every key category set out in the Declaration, the overall response “has also been insufficient” and has not matched the epidemic in scale. According to Peter Piot, the executive director of UNAIDS, “The AIDS epidemic has entered a new and critical phase, and so must the response. The only way we will get ahead of the epidemic is if there is universal access to HIV treatment and prevention. This needs to be the world’s immediate goal.” *(More details on the UNGASS review meeting are available online at*

<http://www.unaids.org/en/events/un+special+session+on+hiv+aids/2005+general+assembly+high+level+meeting+on+hiv+aids.asp>.)

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CENTRAL ASIA COOPERATION ORGANIZATION LAUNCHES REGIONAL PROJECT TO FIGHT HIV/AIDS

At a conference of the Central Asia Cooperation Organization (CACO) held in Almaty, Kazakhstan May 12–13, 2005, two grants were announced to finance projects aimed at reducing the spread of HIV epidemic in the region's countries and preventing its negative social and economic effects. One grant, for a total of \$25 million, was provided by the International Development Association to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Another grant, totaling 1 million pounds (\$1.8 million), was provided by the UK Department for International Development. The \$27 million Regional AIDS Control Project, launched by parties to the Central Asia Cooperation Organization (CACO), aims to minimize the human and economic impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in four Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The financial support is intended to assist three

major components: regional coordination; establishment of a Central Asia Foundation to fight HIV/AIDS; and project monitoring and evaluation.

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BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES PLAN TO BREAK PATENT ON KEY HIV/AIDS MEDICINE

In accordance with a new law approved by the National Congress of Brazil on June 24, domestic pharmaceutical companies would begin producing a generic version of patented AIDS drugs made by international drug companies. The decision was taken to reduce the cost of the drug, known by the brand name Kaletra, and subsequently save the Brazilian government about \$55 million a year. The government currently provides free ART to all who need it—about 160,000 individuals of those registered as living with HIV/AIDS in Brazil.

The announcement, which marked the first time that a government had ever intentionally sought to break the patent of an antiretroviral medicine, was applauded by treatment advocates around the world but called illegal under international trade law by the U.S. government and most business organizations. The government said it would not back down, but it did agree to meet with representatives from the pharmaceutical company, Abbott Laboratories, to discuss alternative measures to reduce the cost of the medicine.

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ACTOR AND UN GOODWILL AMBASSADOR JACKIE CHAN VISITS CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM

Actor Jackie Chan, who also serves as a UN goodwill ambassador, visited Cambodia and Vietnam in April 2005 to help draw attention to the spreading HIV/AIDS epidemic in both countries, particularly among children, as well as the ongoing problems related to landmines. The visit was Chan's second to Cambodia on behalf of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In Vietnam, Chan visited hospitals and specialized centers for patients with HIV/AIDS.

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PAVAROTTI TO PUBLICIZE UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS DURING FAREWELL TOUR

The famous tenor Luciano Pavarotti will publicize the UN Millennium Development Goals during his farewell tournament, which will conclude in 2006. At the UN World Summit in 2000, national leaders pledged their support and determination to achieve substantial improvements in a number of key areas by 2015 as part of Millennium Development Goals. Among the goals are a two-fold decrease in the number of people living below the poverty level throughout the world and a reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS.

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ORGANIZATION HEADED BY DAUGHTER OF FORMER UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT IS NAMED FINALIST FOR MTV AWARD

The AntiSPID Foundation in Ukraine, headed by Yelena Franchuk, daughter of former Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma, was named one of the three finalists of an international contest sponsored by MTV. The organization won the “best idea” award in the category of social advertising for Franchuk’s video clip regarding safer sex.

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7. PUBLICATIONS

TPAA AND UNAIDS PUBLISH HANDBOOK FOR RUSSIAN LEGISLATORS

TPAA and UNAIDS have collaborated to publish “HIV/AIDS, Law and Human Rights: A Handbook for Russian Legislators”. The publication presents detailed information on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the Russian Federation and includes concrete recommendations on measures that legislators can take to protect human rights and promote public health in responding to the epidemic. It also provides examples of the best legislative and regulatory practices from around the world, outlining recommendations on their applicability in Russia. Examples and recommendations can be found that relate to each of the 12 International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights that were developed by the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and UNAIDS and published in 1998. *(The full text of the Handbook can be downloaded from the TPAA website at <http://www.tpaa.net/publications/reports/?id=1155>.)*

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