



PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION

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Who: Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)
What: Provincial Parliamentary Seminar on HIV & AIDS Policy
Where: Karachi, Provincial Assembly of Sindh
When: January 30-31, 2006

PAKISTANI LEGISLATORS, INTERNATIONAL POLICY-MAKERS, & UN REPRESENTATIVES MEET TO DISCUSS PRIORITIES FOR CONTAINING THE HIV EPIDEMIC IN PAKISTAN

KARACHI, PAKISTAN; January 29, 2006 – Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is deeply concerned by last month's report by UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO) stating that in Pakistan, "... new data suggest that the country could be on the verge of serious HIV epidemics." The number of people living with HIV, what is virtually a death sentence in many low-income countries, has reached its highest level in history with 40.3 million infections globally. This is double the number of infections ten years ago. For Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), these staggering numbers signify that greater political leadership of legislators is even more vital at the community, national, and international levels to halt and reverse the spread of the deadly virus.

In an effort to address this looming crisis, **PGA**, the **Provincial Assembly of Sindh**, the **National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan**, **United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)**, and **Aga Khan University (AKU)** will host the *Provincial Parliamentary Seminar on HIV & AIDS Policy* in Karachi, Pakistan on January 30-31, 2006. Approximately 150 participants will attend the conference, with parliamentarians from the four Provincial Assemblies of Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan, and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). National MPs from the Senate and National Assembly of Pakistan and international parliamentarians from **Canada, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, and Thailand** will share examples of HIV & AIDS policies and how to counter stigma and discrimination affecting the lives of **People Living with HIV & AIDS (PLWHAs)**. Ministers, medical experts and representatives of the **National AIDS Control Programme (NACP)**, **Provincial AIDS Control Programmes in Pakistan**, and civil society will attend the meeting. The seminar will re-assess the commitments made by legislators in the *Islamabad Declaration of Action*, the outcome document of PGA's January 2005 *Sub-Regional Parliamentary Seminar on HIV/AIDS in South Asia*.

Internationally renowned health expert, **Dr. Nafis Sadik**, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, will present the Keynote Address during the Inaugural Ceremony. The opening session will also feature remarks by **Dr. Noor Jehan Panezai**, MP (Pakistan) - Chair, PGA National Group, **Sen. Raynell Andreychuk**, MP (Canada), **Hon. Muzaffar Hussain Shah**, Speaker of the Sindh Assembly, and **Dr. Shamsh Kassim-Lakha**, President of Aga Khan University. On Day 1, (Jan. 30th), participants will discuss 1) the global, regional, and national challenges of HIV & AIDS, 2) advocacy and the role of political leadership, and 3) countering stigma and discrimination. The panel sessions on Day 2, (Jan. 31st) will address successful HIV & AIDS interventions with vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, injecting drug users, street children, sex workers, and MSM. Among other key speakers are representatives of **PLWHA** and NGOs working with vulnerable groups. Parliamentary participants will work in groups to draft provincial action plans which will reflect specific interventions and legislation for better access to prevention, treatment and care. **Mr. Naveed Qamar, MP**, PGA International Council member, will present closing remarks in the Concluding Session.

The *Provincial Parliamentary Seminar on HIV & AIDS Policy* is being held with the kind support from the Government of Norway, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Federal Ministry of Health, Government of Pakistan and the OPEC Fund.

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) is a unique network of over 1,300 MPs from 114 parliaments, engaged in a range of action-oriented initiatives that promote democracy, peace, justice and development throughout the world. PGA members are involved in efforts to increase parliamentarians' support of HIV prevention, care, and treatment programmes that are comprehensive, evidence-based, and gender-specific. PGA's work on HIV/AIDS in South Asia began in 2005 in Islamabad, Pakistan, when it hosted the "Sub-Regional Parliamentary Seminar on HIV/AIDS in South Asia" with the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan.