



Федеральная служба по надзору  
в сфере защиты прав потребителей  
и благополучия человека



# Вторая Конференция по вопросам ВИЧ/СПИДа в Восточной Европе и Центральной Азии Second Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS Conference

Официальный сайт Второй конференции по вопросам ВИЧ/СПИДа в Восточной Европе и Центральной Азии. [www.eecaac.org](http://www.eecaac.org)

## DAY ONE: KNOW YOUR EPIDEMIC

❖ The plenary session was opened by Gennady Onishchenko, the Head of the Federal Service on Surveillance for Consumer Rights Protection and Human Wellbeing of the Russian Federation and the Chief Health Inspector of Russia, who welcomed the participants and said the conference was attended by over 2000 delegates from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, as well as from the United States, Britain, Germany, Serbia, Albania. 37% of the participants represent government agencies, 38% are representatives of NGOs and 20% - of the community of people living with HIV, 5% - of the private sector. Conference delegates received greetings from the Russian government, which confirmed Russia's commitment to coordinating efforts in responding to the epidemic in the region as declared during its G8 chairmanship. Speaking on behalf of Russian legislators, Tatyana Yakovleva, member of the State Duma (United Russia) spoke about the role of international cooperation in responding to the epidemic and about the need to consolidate all sectors of society. She emphasised the importance of increased efforts in the area of HIV prevention, legal support of people living with HIV, resolving the issue of government funding for NGOs. Vladimir Mayanovsky, who represented the PLWH community asserted the growing



potential of PLWH organizations and their readiness to cooperate with the government on an equal footing in the implementation of the national programs. Liudmila Untura, the director of «Childhood for Everyone» (Moldova) emphasised the gender aspects of the epidemic and expressed a hope that the voice of women would be heard by those who develop government strategies of providing services for people with HIV and that the initiatives of women's organizations would be supported. In his report Gennady Onishchenko made a general overview of the HIV epidemic, and defined the major objectives and challenges in responding to this epidemic in Russia and other countries of the region. Intravenous drug use is still the most prevalent mode of HIV transmission in Russia, however there has been growth in heterosexual transmission. A large number of cases is registered among migrants. Despite the increasing access to ARV treatment, for most countries of the region universal treatment has not been achieved yet. There has been a rise in the number of cases of full-blown AIDS, opportunistic infections and AIDS-related deaths. In the recent years, the government has been paying a lot more attention to the issues of HIV/AIDS. The Russian government has demonstrated political commitment and provided financial support to the struggle against the epidemic. Legislation in this area is being developed - new regulations, guidelines and standards of treatment have been issued. Health care organizations have received new laboratory equipment, professional training of health care workers is a top priority. The rise in government funding of HIV prevention, testing and treatment is unprecedented - in 2007 it reached 9.7 bln rubles. Russia made a pledge to return to the Global Fund before 2010 the money it provided for the implementation

of programs in Russia. In 2007, treatment was provided to over 23,000 patients, which is 68% of the total number of people needing ARV treatment. Access to treatment among pregnant women is 90%. The question of the effectiveness of the programs being implemented is therefore of paramount importance. It is crucial to reach a balance between treatment and prevention. Advance is hampered by the stigmatization of vulnerable groups: injection drug users, sex workers, men who have sex with men. The role of the PLWH community and of NGOs is still underestimated, they should be more actively involved in government programs, financing mechanisms should be improved. Peter Piot, the Executive Director of UNAIDS, pointed out that despite some progress in addressing the issue on the international level, the epidemic in the countries of Eastern Europe continues to grow. Insufficient prevention work and access of vulnerable groups to prevention and treatment are the major problems. UNAIDS continues to promote harm reduction programs and supports substitution therapy for HIV-positive injection drug users, which has proved effective in many countries. Information campaigns aimed at fighting stigma and discrimination against PLWH are of particular importance, they should be organized in schools, churches, workplaces. The Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Michel Kazatchkine assigned particular importance to Russia's precedent in becoming a donor rather than a recipient of the Global Fund. Mr Kazatchkine said that it was a priority



to base the response to the epidemic on the availability of resources, consideration of local needs, scientific evidence, as well as the creation of a favorable environment where legislation and the public health care system complement each other. Executive Director of the International AIDS Society Craig McClure said during: «Enormous wealth has been generated in many parts of this region through the changes that have taken place in the past twenty years. But many are left out of this progress. The marginalized communities of the region - the very communities most vulnerable to HIV infection - women and girls, men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, sex workers, migrants and prisoners - have been largely left out of this economic and social transformation, and changing health systems and the people that work within them are often unwilling or unable to help them». Alexey Bobrik, the deputy director of the Open Society Institute, who concluded the session, reminded participants that the Global Fund was soon to end its programs and that NGOs were to switch to local sources of funding. He urged to ensure the of the programs by developing a step-by-step plan of transferring the projects from donors to government funding.

❖ The Co-Chairs of EECAAC Head of the Federal Service of Protection of Consumer Rights and Human Wellbeing Gennady Onishchenko, the Executive Director of the International AIDS Society Craig McClure, the Executive Director of UNAIDS Dr Peter Piot, the Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria Michel Kazatchkine took part in the press conference. It was pointed out that the social structure of the HIV epidemic in the region was changing: over 40% of new infections today were registered among women, about 37% are related to unprotected heterosexual contacts (which is a 17% increase on 2002). Answering the journalists' questions, G. G. Onishchenko, the Head of the Federal Service on Surveillance for Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-Being of the Russian Federation, said there was overall progress in the struggle against the epidemic and went on to say, «Our goal is to make it possible for HIV-positive people to live just as long as their peers. Today the government assumes responsibility for their treatment, but it is of no less importance that the patients themselves should have a responsible attitude to treatment». He also emphasised the influence mass media had on young people and the need for «good social advertising, which, unlike beer commercials, promotes moral standards of behavior».



❖ The session «From declarations to actions» was dedicated to the responsibility of political leaders. A Georgian representative, the general director of the Research Center for Infectious Diseases, AIDS and Clinical Immunology, Tengiz Tsirtvadze, told about the strategic plan of struggle against HIV/AIDS, which will cost the country 41 million US dollars. However, it was the report by the Member of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Grishankov, that raised the most interest - he spoke about how difficult it is for HIV/AIDS advocates to change the mentality of politicians. The parliamentary group dealing with this issue has achieved a lot: an active involvement of members of the Duma made it possible to hold a meeting of the State Council, which resulted in important political decisions. However, there are still many problems to solve. Grishankov spoke about the transparency of purchasing antiretroviral drugs, about possible failures to supply drugs, about the need to create a center for monitoring not only prevalence, but also the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programs, as well as about the importance of adhering to the principles of evidence-based medicine.

❖ The section «Molecular epidemiology of HIV» was dedicated to one of the most intriguing scientific aspects of the problem - the search for variants of genes responsible for the ability of the human body to fight the immunodeficiency virus or, conversely, to develop multiple resistance to ART. Ilya Kofiadi of the Immunology Institute presented the results of the research in which the scientists studied the spread of three genetic alleles, responsible for resistance to HIV among different ethnic groups in Russia. Some genes reduce the chances of HIV penetrating the cell, other genes slow down the development of AIDS and even prolongue the lives of people with HIV. By doing population surveys, the researcher identified populations having these genes more often than other people do. This will help epidemiologists develop modern strategies of responding to the HIV epidemic and might also be instrumental in developing a vaccine against AIDS.

❖ At the session «Stigma and discrimination», A.V. Golenkov (Chair of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology at the Chuvash State University) pointed out that HIV-positive patients were discriminated against by health professionals. According to surveys, the main reasons for this are perceived risk of infection and social vulnerability of medical workers. D. L. Groysman (Vinnitsia Human Rights Group, Ukraine) also said that the lack of tolerance for HIV-positive patients among health professionals in Ukraine leads to a lack of trust in medical services and growth of the epidemic. According to him, the Orthodox Church in Ukraine is to a large extent responsible for the stigmatization of people living with HIV.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### MAY 4, AT 5 PM

Peter Piot, the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, will visit the Youth Village on May 4, at 5 pm to speak to the youth in an informal setting, to listen to their view of the HIV epidemic and to answer their questions. The Youth Village was organized at the conference in order to draw attention to the special needs of the youth in our region with regard to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Peter Piot is one of the most active supporters of the involvement and empowerment of young people. It was he who coined the famous phrase: «We must work for young people with young people».

Dr Piot's visit to the Youth Village will be followed by a unique prevention performance «Open Cafe» prepared by young volunteers of the Republican Center for the Struggle Against AIDS and Infectious Diseases (Ulan-Ude, Buryatia), and the Y-PEER project, UNFPA. Alexey Vorobyov, a young singer and actor, the Goodwill Ambassador of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), will take part in the show. This performance is a unique form of prevention work based on an equal and open discussion.