

Press release

Amsterdam, 1 November 2009

Dutch Parliament Must Stop AIDS Cutbacks

The Ministry of Development of the Netherlands is planning to slash its budget for humanitarian aid programmes, with 50% of the cutbacks targeting HIV/AIDS initiatives. Today, Dutch AIDS organisations have joined together to condemn this decision as irresponsible and incomprehensible. In the run-up to the parliamentary debate of the issue on Monday 2 November, they have asked the Dutch parliament to reject the cutbacks. If the cuts go ahead, more than 100,000 people will no longer receive the medicine they need to stay alive, and the government will cease all investment into vaccination research.

The cuts

In total, the budget for funding international aid organisations will be cut by more than €100 million. Almost half that amount will be withdrawn from programmes that tackle HIV/AIDS. For example, the annual Dutch contribution to UNAIDS, the United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS, is to be reduced by one quarter, in other words, by €9 million. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will receive up to 31% less funding (€28.1 million) and UNFPA (the United Nations programme on sexual health) will have to do with 11% (€6.6 million) less. Meanwhile, contributions to the development of vaccinations and other new prevention methods will completely stop as of next year.

Irresponsible choices

The choices made are incomprehensible, having the effect of punishing programmes that have repeatedly demonstrated their worth and effectiveness. The Global Fund, which the Netherlands is set to chair in the near future, has proven to be one of the most effective donors in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria. No other international institution or bilateral donor has demonstrated comparable results or the level of leadership in the fight against AIDS. Meanwhile, UNFPA works across the world to improve the sexual health of women and girls, so that they can better protect themselves against HIV infections. The decision to withdraw funding from vaccine research is yet more astounding in the light of recent breakthroughs and the Netherlands reputation as a pioneering donor in this field.

AIDS treatment at risk

The global economic crisis is taking a disproportionate toll on people in developing countries. They may not have caused the crisis, but they are certainly bearing the brunt, as more and more countries announce that they can no longer sustain their HIV/AIDS programmes at current levels. This means that **hundreds of thousands of people** will no longer receive the medicines on which their lives depend. At the same time, hope recedes for the **millions of people** who still do not have access to these medicines.

Letter to the parliament

The letter was signed by *AIDS Foundation East-West (AFEW)*, AIDS Fonds, GNP+ (Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS), HCI (Health Connections International), IAVI (International AIDS Vaccine Initiative), ICSS (International Civil Society Support), KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation and STOP AIDS NOW!.

Contacts:

For more information please contact the STOP AIDS NOW! Press Office: Margot Mulder (+31 06 52155424) or Paul Zantkuijl (+31 06 14390606).