



28 April ICD will focus on G8 promises

Unions Target Japanese Embassies Over G8 Promises for Health & AIDS

The Global Union AIDS Programme (GUAP) has kicked off a campaign asking unions and governments throughout the world to contact Japanese Embassies to convince the G8 Summit next July to strengthen health care systems and create a better accountability over its promises on HIV/AIDS.

Japan will host and preside over this July's G8 annual meeting of the richest countries of the world (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, U.S. and the U.K.), which this year will serve as a decisive indicator of the G8's seriousness to achieve Universal Access to treatment, prevention, care and support for HIV/AIDS and to strengthen health systems.

The Chair of GUAP, Alan Leather, made the announcement as part of this year's lead up to the 28 April "International Commemoration Day (ICD) for Dead and Injured Workers", which aims to highlight health system development and delivery, under the banner of "Good Occupational Health For All Workers". He said GUAP will ask unions to deliver a message to the Japanese embassy in their country and to request that their governments do the same.



"After three years of calling on the G8 to establish a high level Working Group on HIV/AIDS, the German G8 Presidency last year took a major step by issuing the first report on meeting G8 targets for AIDS. This now paves the way for annual reviews and for a G8 Working Group to be formally created which will provide recommendations for action to subsequent G8 summits."

Leather said a reliable mechanism is needed to ensure that the G8 actually implements its promises regarding AIDS. He said that with so many lives at risk we must accelerate progress to achieve Universal Access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 and to realize the Millennium Development Goals, together with strengthening of health systems. He said the total resources pledged last year for all these commitments was insufficient. The G8 needs to restore confidence by creating a mechanism that monitors progress to meet existing goals, including identifying realistic resource requirements, instead of making yet more promises.

He said that over 100 million people fall into absolute poverty each year due to illness or disability because they and many others of the world's population lacks access to health services. For the world's working poor, sickness or injury often leads to job loss with no compensation or health care. The high cost of health care is the single most important factor driving the working poor into deeper financial difficulties, and occupational injury and disease thereby aggravate world poverty. "AIDS is itself an occupational disease in many sectors and beyond that also contributes to the overall impact on workers' health and productivity, world wide", he said

“Resources for strengthening health systems must be a priority so as to halt the slide of segments of the world’s population into extreme poverty because they have no access to or are unable to afford adequate treatment or care”.

But he warned that investments in health care should not compromise resources that already were or need to be earmarked for specific diseases, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where the death toll due to malaria and HIV/AIDS is the highest, particularly for children and women. “There must be new commitments for both, at the same time” he said.

World Trade Union Bodies Prepare for the G8

A trade union statement coordinated by the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) for the G8 is expected to focus on the major economic issues, investment & poverty, climate change, African Development, as well as public and occupational health. Leather said he would ask trade unions contacting Japanese embassies to show support for the entire statement, as an important context for AIDS, and public health services but that they also request their own government to send a specific message about the need for the G8 to set up a reliable mechanism for implementing its promises regarding AIDS.

He appealed to civil society to join unions, especially in Southern countries where infectious disease rates are shockingly high and health system capabilities unacceptably low, to take these messages of shared concerns to the gates of Japanese embassies. This demonstration of support will underscore the demands outlined in the TUAC G8 statement when a senior international labour delegation meets the Japanese President prior to the G8.

“Trade unions view HIV/AIDS within a framework for sustainable development, where the blind pursuit of economic growth cannot come at the expense of social or environmental progress. We intend to show the significant support that exists for our approaches” We applaud Professor Takemi – one of Japan’s leading health experts – for emphasizing the need to weave a cloth of strong vertical and horizontal threads of health interventions.

Leather said that during this 28 April ICD the GUAP would help strengthen the overall trade union proposals for the G8 by building broader coalitions with those that share labour’s concerns for HIV/AIDS, occupational health and safety and health system strengthening.

We will carry our campaign for a new G8 AIDS mechanism in cooperation with the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) from our contact with Japanese embassies through to the Global AIDS Week of Action and then onto the G8 summit. The GUAP will also deliver similar messages to government delegations attending this years UN Commission on Sustainable Development (early May), the World Health Assembly (mid May), the International Labour Conference (early June) and the UNGASS High-Level Review (June)

For more information contact

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