



28 April ICD will focus on G8 promises

Unions Target Japanese Embassies Over G8 Promises for Health & AIDS

Backgrounder:

The Global Unions 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 better accountability for its promises on HIV/AIDS.

Japan will host and preside over this July's G8 annual meeting of the largest economies 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 GUAP made the announcement as part of the 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". GUAP will also 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.

A reliable mechanism is needed to ensure that the G8 actually implements its promises regarding HIV/AIDS. With so many lives at risk, accelerated progress to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010 and to realize the Millennium Development Goals is vital, together with strengthening of health systems. 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.

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 lack 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.

Resources for strengthening health systems must therefore 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.

However we must remain cautious that investments in health care do 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.

World Trade Union Bodies Prepare for the G8

The trade union statement coordinated by the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) for the G8 Summit focuses on the major economic issues, including HIV/AIDS as well as investment & poverty, climate change, African Development, and public and occupational health. Trade unions contacting Japanese embassies also support the entire statement, at the same time as requesting their own governments to send a specific message about the need for the G8 to set up a reliable mechanism for implementing its promises regarding AIDS.

The GUAP appeals 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 Prime Minister prior to the G8.

For copies of this backgrounder: 28 April AIDS campaign

(NOTE: these will come on line only as they become available)

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