

Infectious Diseases: HIV/AIDS

Commitment

“We believe the time is right for the major scientific and other stakeholders -both public and private sector, in developed and developing countries — to come together in a more organized fashion....We endorse this concept and call for the establishment of a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.”

G8 Action to Endorse and Establish a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise

Background

In 2004, nearly 40 million people globally were estimated to be living with HIV. The AIDS epidemic claimed more than 3 million lives and close to 5 million people acquired the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in 2004.⁹⁶⁷ Of the world's 23 million people living with HIV/AIDS more than 93% live in developing countries.⁹⁶⁸ At the 2004 Sea Island Summit, the G8 reaffirmed their long standing commitment towards combating the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. While the G8's involvement in this area is not new, 2004 saw with it the appeal for the creation of a global HIV vaccine enterprise. The enterprise, as laid out in the G8 Action to Endorse and Establish a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, should establish a strategic plan that should serve as a blueprint for helping to align better existing resources and to channel new resources more efficiently.⁹⁶⁹ Specifically, the plan should: “Encourage the development of a number of coordinated global HIV Vaccine Development Centers; stimulate the development of increased dedicated HIV vaccine manufacturing capacity; establish standardized preclinical and clinical laboratory assessment; expand an integrated international clinical trials system; optimize interactions among regulatory authorities; and encourage greater engagement by scientists from developing countries.”⁹⁷⁰ This commitment is the latest effort in the G8 trichotomy of HIV treatment, care and prevention.

On 18 January 2005, the Global HIV Vaccine Initiative released its “Scientific Strategic Plan” detailing the Initiative's ten-year plan of research and development to combat HIV/AIDS.⁹⁷¹ The plan was released in accordance with (but not necessarily in response to) G8 requests from the Sea Island Summit. Nevertheless, there remains some concern about the depth and breadth of current G8 efforts as a whole. On April 29th 2005 IAVI issued a press release, according to the organization, “G8 countries would have to strengthen their political leadership and provide expanded assistance to developing nations for AIDS vaccine R&D.”⁹⁷² At the upcoming 2005 Gleneagles Summit, it is widely expected that the G8 will agree to an International Finance Facility for HIV vaccine research. This means that G8 states will make available now, through bonds, money that would be allocated for HIV research over the span of many years, with the hopes that the influx of available research funds in the present will speed the discovery of the vaccine.

Assessment

Country	Non-Compliance -1	Work in Progress 0	Full Compliance +1
Canada			+1
France			+1
Germany			+1
Italy			+1
Japan	-1		
Russia	-1		
United Kingdom			+1
United States			+1
European Union			+1
Overall: 0.56			

Individual Country Compliance Breakdown

1. Canada: +1

Canada has registered a high level of compliance with its Sea Island commitment regarding support for the Global HIV Vaccine Initiative — leading G8 nations in the speed of its response.

Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada has encouraged coordinated global HIV vaccine development and is a major financial contributor to the International Aids Vaccine Initiative (IAVI)⁹⁷³ — a founding member of the Global HIV Vaccine Initiative.⁹⁷⁴ Ottawa contributed C\$45-million to the IAVI, as well as C\$5-million to the Africa AIDS Vaccine Program.⁹⁷⁵ For example, AAVP’s efforts have ensured that research laboratories in “Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda have been upgraded to international standards”.⁹⁷⁶ As well, nearly 80 African scientists have been trained in laboratory techniques.⁹⁷⁷

At the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok held in July 2004, Canada continued to consult with other IAVI partners in both the public and private sectors over possible vaccine proposals.⁹⁷⁸ In addition, in 2004 Canada became the first, and for a considerable amount of time, the only, industrialized country to being to develop an HIV Vaccines Plan, which includes both domestic and international contributions to the discovery and delivery of HIV vaccines. The Canadian HIV Vaccines Plan is mandated to fulfil numerous goals including: ensuring Canada’s commitment to the development of HIV vaccines; ensuring public engagement; ensuring integrated strategic plans for HIV vaccine research and development; ensuring equitable vaccine access and delivery; and, ensuring accountability, monitoring and evaluation.⁹⁷⁹

Canada, though, remain extremely active in the arena of international HIV/AIDS policy. In the time since the G8 Summit in July Canada has chaired the governing body of UNAIDS from 2004-2005, has assumed a seat on the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and has agreed to host the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto in 2006. In addition, Canada is a leading country in the developed world in the provision of generic retroviral HIV/AIDS drugs for the developing world.⁹⁸⁰

2. France +1

France has fully complied with the HIV/AIDS commitment outlined at the Sea Island Summit. On November 25, 2004, French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin held a meeting bringing together important actors in the fight against AIDS. During this meeting he proclaimed that AIDS would be the “Grande Cause Nationale” for the year 2005.⁹⁸¹ Secondly, during a speech in New York, on September 20 2004 alongside President of Brazil, French President Jacques Chirac put forth a proposal for a new form of financial aid for developing countries generated from an international tax. He noted that a similar regime for the funding of vaccine initiatives and research is also envisaged.⁹⁸²

On October 19, 2004, French Minister of Health, Philippe Douste-Blazy held a meeting in Paris reuniting the health ministers of the seven European nations currently engaged in AIDS vaccine research. During this meeting the ministers made a joint declaration in which they emphasized the importance of heightened coordination and financing of AIDS Vaccine research, they also accepted to adopt the French initiative to create one scientific agenda for Europe in respect to vaccine research.⁹⁸³ Furthermore, on World AIDS Day (December 1) 2004, Philippe Douste-Blazy, declared his active support for innovative research initiatives such as the programs developed by the ‘Agence Nationale de Recherche’. At this time the Minister also stated that the government planned to accelerate the implementation of two particular components of its strategy to fight AIDS: the first being to increase global access to medication and the second to create a European strategy to coordinate research for an HIV/AIDS vaccine.⁹⁸⁴

Furthermore, on March 9th 2005, Xavier Darcos, French Minister for Co-operation, Development and Francophonie and Hillary Benn, UK International Development Secretary co-hosted a meeting in London entitled “Making the Money Work”.⁹⁸⁵ The meeting focused on achieving greater coordination among partners working to fight against global AIDS. The team addressed a conference of 93 participants including ministers and AIDS ambassadors from developing and western countries, people living with the disease, civil society, multilateral organizations and businesses. Xavier Darcos affirmed that “fighting AIDS requires more money, but it also requires better cooperation. To make the money work, we need to work even closer with UNAIDS and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria”.⁹⁸⁶ Moreover, on April 19th 2005, “Friends of the Global Fund Europe” was launched in Paris, France in order to mobilize european institutions, private companies and public opinion in support of the Global Fund.⁹⁸⁷

3. Germany: +1

Germany has fully complied with its obligations under the Sea Island HIV/AIDS commitment regarding the establishment of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

Along with France, Italy, the UK and others, Germany attended the 19 October 2004 meeting in Paris hosted by French Health Ministers Phillipe Douste-Blazy at which all states endorsed a French plan concerning the HIV vaccine. Ministers made a joint declaration in which they emphasized the importance of heightened coordination and financing of AIDS Vaccine research, and agreed create one scientific agenda for Europe in respect to vaccine research.⁹⁸⁸

In addition to the adoption of the 2004 French proposal for a joint European vaccine research agenda, in January of 2005, the Global HIV/AIDS Vaccine Enterprise, whose membership includes the European Commission and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), outlined a strategic plan for developing an effective HIV vaccine.⁹⁸⁹ The plan has been developed through a process of consultation involving 140 participants from 17 countries, plus the European Commission. It summarizes the major roadblocks to developing an HIV vaccine, outlines the current scientific priorities, and elaborates an initial strategic approach to address these priorities.⁹⁹⁰ Germany, through its membership in both the European Commission and the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership is party to these plans. Similarly, Germany began running its own clinical trials of an AIDS vaccine at the University of Bonn in February of 2004.⁹⁹¹

Lastly, Germany also continues to contribute to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, having pledged 111,261,872 Euros for 2004 — 2005, some of which will be directed towards vaccine research.⁹⁹²

4. Italy: +1

Italy registered full compliance with its commitments concerning the development of AIDS vaccines through increased alliances with international AIDS organizations, its participation in new initiatives and significant state funding of AIDS trials. In September Italy hosted the 1st Annual European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership in Rome.⁹⁹³ Italy, along with seven other countries, issued a joint call for better laboratory coordination for an AIDS vaccine, however sidestepped increased funding.⁹⁹⁴ The declaration made by the health ministers described vaccine as, “an absolute necessity...” and called for a, “strengthening in efforts developed by research capacity” to, “pool results,” in order to maximize progress.⁹⁹⁵

Commencing in March of 2005 the Italian Istituto Superiore di Sanita (National Institute of Health) funded the trial of possible AIDS vaccines.⁹⁹⁶ EuroVacc, of which Italy is a founding member, announced the launching of AIDS Vaccine trials in Lausanne and London, 17 November 2005.⁹⁹⁷

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In 2004 — 2005 the Italian government pledged 200 million USD in to the Global Fund, whose directive is the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS along with the promotion and funding for research and development of potential AIDS vaccines.⁹⁹⁹ On June 28, 2004 the Italian Directorate for Development Cooperation signed a statement of cooperation between Italy and UNAIDS, an organization whose mandate includes the funding for research and development of an AIDS vaccine.¹⁰⁰⁰

5. Japan: -1

Japan has failed to comply with this commitment providing little funding or political attention for the issue of HIV vaccine research, let alone for the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise. On July 11, 2004, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs Ichiro Fujisaki headed a delegation which participated in the XV International AIDS Conference also held in Bangkok from the 11th to the 16th of July 2004.¹⁰⁰¹ Although, the ministers at the XV International AIDS Conference reiterated the importance of a strategic plan to developing a vaccine¹⁰⁰², no concrete steps were discussed in order to move forward with this commitment.

Moreover, on April 4th 2005, Japanese minister Kazuo Sunaga made a statement at the 38th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development, in which he stressed three points essential to Japan's strategy to combat HIV/AIDS: comprehensive preventative measures, care and support for those living with AIDS and the establishment of adequate primary health care systems in developing countries.¹⁰⁰³ Vaccine development was not at all mentioned. Although Japan has reiterated the importance of a strategic plan to developing a vaccine, there is very little evidence that Japan has taken any steps to actually implement the benchmarks highlighted during the Sea Island summit.

6. Russia: -1

The Russian Federation has failed to comply with the HIV Vaccine Enterprise. Although Moscow continues to provide financial assistance to various international organizations, the Russian Federation has failed to explicitly support the research and development of vaccine research centers, trials, and other efforts necessary to the development of a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

For the fiscal year 2004, the Russian Federation contributed 5 million USD to the Global Fund¹⁰⁰⁴ and 500,000 USD for the third consecutive year to UNAIDS¹⁰⁰⁵, which is a major financial donor to the International Aids Vaccine Initiative, a not-for-profit organization seeking to develop an HIV vaccine.¹⁰⁰⁶ At the APEC Forum in Santiago Chile, Russia confirmed the need to work collaboratively with the appropriate international organizations such as UNAIDS, WHO, and the Global Fund to increase cooperation in preventing HIV/AIDS and promoting "access to safe and affordable medicines and treatment for people living with AIDS" and other infectious diseases.¹⁰⁰⁷ Even though Russia has reiterated its commitment to the overall struggle with the AIDS endemic through international forums, no steps have been taken towards the establishment of a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

7. United Kingdom +1

The United Kingdom has fully complied with its obligations under the Sea Island HIV/AIDS commitment regarding the establishment of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

Along with France, Germany, Italy and others, the UK attended the 19 October 2004 meeting in Paris hosted by French Health Ministers Phillipe Douste-Blazy at which all states endorsed a French plan concerning the HIV vaccine. At a meeting Gareth Thomas, Secretary of State for Development, acting on behalf of John Reid, Secretary of State for Health, was signatory to a declaration calling for increased coordination and financing of AIDS vaccine research.¹⁰⁰⁸ The

declaration also called for a unified scientific agenda for Europe regarding AIDS vaccine research.¹⁰⁰⁹ Similarly, the declaration also reinforced the need for collaborative efforts among researchers in order to accelerate vaccine research and clinical trials.

In January of 2005, The Global HIV/AIDS Vaccine Enterprise, whose membership includes the European Commission and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP), has outlined a strategic plan for developing an effective HIV vaccine.¹⁰¹⁰ The plan has been developed through a process of consultation involving 140 participants from 17 countries, plus the European Commission. It summarizes the major roadblocks to developing an HIV vaccine, outlines the current scientific priorities, and elaborates an initial strategic approach to address these priorities.¹⁰¹¹ The UK, through its membership in both the European Commission and the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership is party to these plans.

Nevertheless, on a national policy level, while HIV/AIDS has become a principal focus of the UK's foreign and development policies, vaccine research is notably absent. A Department of International Development (DFID) report issued on 23 November 2004 states that "AIDS is a centrepiece of the UK's presidencies of the G8 and the EU in 2005. The UK will use these opportunities to build greater political commitment to tackle AIDS and secure agreement about what needs to be done internationally."¹⁰¹² However, despite this renewed focus, neither the development of an HIV vaccine or the Global HIV Vaccine Initiative appear to have gained any official recognition in, or incorporation into, the UK's HIV/AIDS policy. In July 2004, the United Kingdom released "Taking Action: The UK's Strategy for Tackling HIV and AIDS in the Developing World," a comprehensive policy review of the country's involvement in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. Despite its length of 81 pages, the report included only one paragraph on the development of HIV vaccine and committed the government only to "[c]ontinued support for AIDS vaccine development."¹⁰¹³ Similarly, in another report released in September 2004 by DFID entitled "Working in Partnership with the Joint United Nations Programme for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)" detailing the UK's relationship with the top multilateral body tackling the global pandemic, the word 'vaccine' is only used once in a reference to a 2001 UN Security Council Resolution — hardly a sign of UK enthusiasm for the development of an HIV vaccine.¹⁰¹⁴

8. United States +1

The United States has fully complied with its obligations under the Sea Island HIV/AIDS commitment regarding the establishment of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise.

While recent endeavours have not been conducive to the establishment of a Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, the government continues to support the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, which received 4.154 billion USD in 2004 from the United States Congress, of which 1.397 billion was used for AIDS research.¹⁰¹⁵ In 2005, 1.472 billion USD of the total NIAID budget of 4.403 billion USD is allocated towards AIDS research, which includes 100 million for the Global Fund and 14.5 million for the Virtual Vaccine Research Centre.¹⁰¹⁶

Through USAID, the US government remains a major financial contributor to the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, which is a founding member of the Enterprise.¹⁰¹⁷ As the world's largest organization working solely on the development of the AIDS vaccine, the IAVI is engaged in a variety of partnerships, working with scientists and NGOs in developing countries,

as well as national government organizations in its vaccine research, development, and public policy programs.¹⁰¹⁸ Although there are plans to execute Phase I and II studies “later in 2005”, in an “unprecedented collaboration” between the NIAID (and its Divisions of Aids, Vaccine Research Centre, and HIV Vaccine Trials Network) and the IAVI, little progress has been made thus far in such comprehensive approaches and cooperation.¹⁰¹⁹

Furthermore, President George W. Bush announced the establishment of a new US Vaccine Research and Development Center, pledging \$488 million in FY2004 and requesting \$533 million in FY2005 for the centre and HIV vaccine research itself.¹⁰²⁰ However, since that time, there has been neither a follow-up nor any further mention of this valuable and important commitment, which therefore cannot count as evidence towards compliance the G8 Summit commitment.

9. European Union: +1

The European Union has registered full compliance with its commitments made at the G8 summit in Savannah Georgia by not only participating in initiatives to advance the success of an AIDS vaccine but by also funding and contributing to groups whose impetus’ include their development and distribution.

At the E.U.-U.S Summit concerning ‘fighting the challenge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic’ in late June 2004 both parties confirmed commitments to, “accelerate the development of vaccines...”¹⁰²¹ The European Commission adopted on 27 April 2005 a new program for action to strengthen Europe’s support to confront HIV/AIDS (as well as TB and Malaria) outside the E.U. in an attempt to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Section 3.4, Article 48 of the program states, “the E.C. will support the research and development of new tools and interventions through projects designed to accelerate the development of new vaccines...”¹⁰²² At the “Health in Europe” conference in Paris, the E.U. participated in and worked towards the goals of the meetings which included increased collaboration in the search for an AIDS vaccine as well as the establishment of a European Vaccine Trials Network.¹⁰²³ The Commission co-hosted the 2nd Annual Europe AIDS Conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, in September at which members of the research and medical community pooled resources.¹⁰²⁴ The resulting, “Vilnius Declaration,” promised the, “investing in research and development of effective preventive technologies such as vaccines...”¹⁰²⁵ The European Union participated in the 1st Annual European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership. The European Union is the most significant contributor to the EDCTP, which allows increased cohesion and collaboration in AIDS vaccine development and trials.¹⁰²⁶ The European Union is the second largest contributor to the Global Fund, whose mandate includes the research and development of new AIDS vaccines, in 2004-2005 total contributions by the Commission to the Fund totalled 321,442,528 USD.¹⁰²⁷

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