



International Network of People who Use Drugs



Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

Prof. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, IAS President
Dr. Chris Beyrer, IAS President-Elect & International Chair of Conference Coordinating Committee
Mr. Bernard Kadasia, IAS Acting Executive Director

International AIDS Society Governing Council and Secretariat
International AIDS Society HQ
Avenue de France 23
CH-1202 Geneva
Switzerland

26th May 2014

Dear Professor Barré-Sinoussi, Dr. Beyrer and Mr. Kadasia,

Re: San Francisco short-listed to host the International AIDS Conference in 2018.

We are writing to you as global networks representing people who use drugs and female, male and transgender sex workers and our supporters and allies to express our great consternation that San Francisco is amongst the cities included in the shortlist to host the International AIDS Conference in 2018.

As you are no doubt more than aware, in order for a city to qualify as a host for an International AIDS Conference it must be in a country that has no legal barriers to the entry, stay or residence of people living with HIV. Whilst the United States does indeed meet this vital qualifying criteria having in 2009 overturned its previous extant legal impediments on these rights, we feel that holding the conference in the United States would be an egregiously flawed decision.

Both sex workers and people who use drugs, two of the most affected key populations in the HIV epidemic do face considerable, rigorously enforced legal barriers to entering the United States. In addition, whilst the United States has made enormous contributions to the fight against the epidemic, it still has in place a federal ban on purchasing supplies for needle and syringe programmes, both domestically and in its overseas programmes, and requires that beneficiaries of federal funds sign the infamous "anti-prostitution pledge". Both of these pieces of legislation pose serious structural barriers to building effective HIV prevention programmes amongst sex workers and people who inject drugs.

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We are frankly flabbergasted, and we do not think it an exaggeration to say, insulted, that so soon after the 2012 Washington IAC in which the slogan "No sex workers, no drug users, no IAC" was widely heard as a result of the systemic exclusion of international members of these communities from taking part in the conference that a return to the United States is even being considered.

The lessons of the Washington conference have clearly not been learnt and the concerns voiced by people who use drugs, sex workers and their allies have been ignored. Should the 2018 conference go ahead in San Francisco we will once again see a conference lacking in the voices of two of the communities most severely impacted by the epidemic. This defies, and makes a mockery of the often voiced commitment to ensuring the full inclusion and meaningful participation of all key affected populations. Such a decision would send the signal that in spite of the epidemiological evidence that repressive legal environments, criminalisation, stigma and other structural drivers are ensuring that sex workers and drug users, specifically, injecting drug users are massively disproportionately affected by the epidemic that our voices do not matter and are not wanted in the preeminent international platform for exchanging views, and providing leadership in the fight against the epidemic.

In light of these facts, we implore you not to, once again, discredit the International AIDS Conference by holding it in a country to which members of two of the key affected populations will be unable to safely gain entry. We urge you to show concrete commitment to the theme of this year's conference "no one left behind", and to hold the 2018 conference in a country that does not place systemic barriers to the meaningful participation of members of all key affected communities.

In conclusion, we call upon you to commit to not holding the IAC in the United States until it has repealed its restrictive barriers on the right to enter, stay and reside for people who use drugs and sex workers, and until it has repealed the federal ban on needle and syringe programs and removed the "anti-prostitution pledge" from its funding conditions.

Stand up in solidarity with sex workers and people who use drugs and say no to San Francisco in 2018.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Eliot Ross Albers, PhD
Executive Director
International Network of People who Use
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Ruth Morgan Thomas
Global Coordinator
The Global Network of Sex Work Projects
(NSWP)



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