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## Ahead of “AIDS 2020: Virtual” Conference, AHF Calls for Transparency and Accountability in Global Public Health

LOS ANGELES (July 3, 2020) Ahead of the first-ever fully virtual International AIDS Conference set to take place on July 6-10 during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) calls on the global public health community and world leaders not to abandon the fight against AIDS, genuinely commit to fundamental reforms of the global public health security framework, and defend access to lifesaving medicines for people everywhere against Big Pharma greed.

“Sadly the world is now paying the price for letting so many warning signs about an impending public health crisis go unheeded, without a unified plan of action, nor leadership that is ready and willing to rise to the occasion and defend humanity against COVID-19,” said Michael Weinstein, AHF President. “Protecting public health is a sacred trust. To ensure hundreds of thousands of people didn’t die in vain because of cover-ups, delays and corruption, we must singularly commit ourselves to demanding transparency and accountability in all aspects of global health, so that we don’t continue repeating the mistakes of this profound tragedy over and over again.”

AHF’s presence at AIDS 2020: Virtual, as this year’s conference has been called, will focus on driving advocacy efforts to protect gains that have been made in the global fight on AIDS while calling for reforms in how the world responds to pandemics. There will also be a spotlight on Gilead Sciences’ profiteering from COVID-19 by price gouging remdesivir during a public health emergency, a drug that has been shown to speed up recovery in critically ill coronavirus patients. Read AHF’s recent statement on Gilead’s “war profiteering” [here](#).

The conference activities will include an exhibition booth with live chat, a booth at the so-called Global Village community space featuring youth leaders from the innovative [Girls Act!](#) empowerment campaign, a scientific program featuring a dozen research posters, and three satellite panels with participation by leading thinkers in global public health.

The satellite panels will take place on the following dates and times:

### **Monday, July 6**

#### AIDS—The Forgotten Pandemic

Live at 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. PDT, with a recorded replay at 11 p.m. – 12 a.m. PDT

Featuring:

Dr. Adele Schwartz Benzaken – Moderator  
Senior Global Medical Director, AIDS Healthcare Foundation  
Former Director of the Department of STI, HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis, Ministry of Health of Brazil

Dr. Angeli Achrekar  
Principal Deputy US Global AIDS Coordinator, US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)

Laurie Garrett  
Pulitzer Prize-Winning Journalist, and Bestselling Author of “I Heard the Sirens Scream”, “The Coming Plague” and “Ebola & Betrayal of Trust”.

Dr. Lucica Ditiu  
Executive Director, Stop TB Partnership

Allan Maleche  
Executive Director, Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN)  
Former Chair, Implementer Group, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Dr. Ricardo Baptista Leite  
Member of Parliament – Portugal  
Founder and President of UNITE Global network of Parliamentarians Committed to Ending Infectious Diseases

Dr. Jorge Saavedra, Executive Director of the AHF Global Public Health Institute at the University of Miami  
Former Head of the National AIDS Program of Mexico

### **Tuesday, July 7**

#### Digital Marketing Mania

Live at 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. PDT, with a recorded replay at 11 p.m. – 12 a.m. PDT

Featuring:

Oluwakemi Gbadamosi – Moderator  
Senior Manager for Public Relations and Communications, AHF Africa Bureau

Carmella Vong  
Account Strategist, Google

Zach Milewski  
Account Strategist, Google

John Nguyen  
Associate Director, Global Web Development & Data Analytics, AHF

Raif Derrazi  
HIV+ Bodybuilder & Influencer

Valerie Hernández  
Digital Strategist & Project Manager, Pairus Digital Agency

Steve Levin  
Co-founder, Commando LLC

### **Wednesday, July 8**

#### Transgender Challenges Around the World

Live at 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. PDT, with a recorded replay at 11 p.m. – 12 a.m. PDT

Featuring:

Queen Victoria Ortega – Moderator  
President of FLUX, and Transgender Rights Advocate

Laith Ashley  
Actor, Model and Influencer

Dr. Christiaan Kier  
Professor of Rehabilitation Therapy, California State University, Los Angeles

Anjali Rimi Koka  
President, Parivar Bay Area

Chela Demuir  
Founder, Unique Woman's Coalition

Maya Jafer  
Actress and Activist

The satellite panels and other conference activities will be accessible via the official [AIDS 2020](#) website. A paid conference registration is required to participate, except for the Global Village, which is open to the public. Additional details about AHF's program of participation in AIDS 2020: Virtual are available at <https://ahf-iac.org/>.

“We have lost human contact and grassroots advocacy in AIDS 2020, but we are still coming to this virtual conference with an advocacy mindset and a sense of urgency, because the world is seeing first-hand what happens when we ignore public health or it gets sidelined by politics and profit motives – people die, and they die everywhere irrespective of border restrictions,” said Terri Ford, AHF Chief of Global Advocacy Policy. “We want to remind the world, AIDS is not over, COVID-19 is tragic and needs a comprehensive response plan and a leadership overhaul, but we must not abandon one pandemic while we take on another – every single year over 700,000 people still die of AIDS-related illnesses and 1.7 million become newly infected, while millions still don’t have access to treatment. This is far from over and we must not forget the lessons learned over the past 30 years!”

**ENDS**

For more information, please contact Ged Kenslea at [gedk@aidshealth.org](mailto:gedk@aidshealth.org) or (323) 791-5526

**About AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF)**

**AIDS Healthcare Foundation** (AHF), the largest global AIDS organization, currently provides medical care and/or services to over 1.4 million people in 45 countries worldwide in the US, Africa, Latin America/Caribbean, the Asia/Pacific Region and Eastern Europe. To learn more about AHF, please visit our website: [www.aidshealth.org](http://www.aidshealth.org), find us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/aidshealth](https://www.facebook.com/aidshealth) and follow us on Twitter: [@aidshealthcare](https://twitter.com/aidshealthcare) and Instagram: [@aidshealthcare](https://www.instagram.com/aidshealthcare).

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