

"Workshop Highlights Successful Prevention in Africa of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS"

PRESS RELEASE

October 24th 2002 - Under the aegis of The Business Humanitarian Forum, representatives from businesses, United Nations system agencies, and foundations gathered this afternoon for a workshop entitled "Combating the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Africa: Mother to Child Transmission Prevention". The participants discussed antiretroviral (ARV) treatment programs that are currently being implemented in Africa and explored possibilities for further access and use of ARV in integrated mother to child prevention initiatives in the region.

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who opened the meeting, cited the overwhelming importance of responding to the AIDS epidemic in Africa and welcomed the initiative of the BHF in convening the meeting. He announced an important financial contribution of the Accentus Foundation, Zurich, to the Sant'Egidio Mother to Child Transmission program.

The two featured speakers, Mr. Anil Soni from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria and Dr. Leonardo Emberti Gialloreti from the Sant "Egidio Community addressed the specific efforts that are being made on regional and local levels. Mr. Soni spoke about the general approach that the Global Fund is taking for developing antiretroviral treatment strategies in resource-poor settings. Dr. Emberti, director of the first integrated ARV treatment program in Africa, called DREAM - Drug Resource Enhancement Against AIDS in Mozambique being carried out in two reproductive health centers in Mozambique, presented information regarding the program's experiences and planned growth. The program is one follow-up to the success of the Sant'Egidio Community in mediating an end to the civil conflict in Mozambique.

Participants in the workshop provided ideas and suggestions to launch similar integrated ARV projects in the region which could be carried out as public-private partnerships between businesses, international institutions and local governments. The Business Humanitarian Forum will continue to advance possibilities for concrete partnerships in the area of HIV/AIDS Mother to Child Transmission Prevention in Africa. As Amb. John Maresca, President of the BHF stated, "We believe businesses which invest in Africa have a direct interest in meeting the challenges of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The experience of the Sant'Egidio Community in Mozambique "the DREAM project - holds great promise for solving the Mother to Child Transmission problem throughout the continent."

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