



## **CLOSING SESSION SPEECH – AIDS 2008**

**DR PEDRO CAHN**

**PAST IAS PRESIDENT / AIDS 2008 CONFERENCE CO-CHAIR**

Dear guests, colleagues and more importantly, dear friends,

I am here on my last day as President of the International AIDS Society, a task that I have undertaken with great pleasure and honor.

AIDS 2008 has been the second largest one in the history of the International AIDS Conferences and the first one held in Latin America. More than ever, at this conference we have faced reality and we have helped give visibility to vulnerable populations by naming these groups loud and clearly.

Again, it's time to call on all UN Member States to actively include the most at risk population – men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, sex workers, youth, women and children- in the HIV/AIDS response.

As part of the response to HIV/AIDS epidemic in Latin America, I can assure you that this conference has been a milestone for the region and for the world.

A couple of examples: The commitment of the Summit of the Health and Education Ministries of Latin America and the Caribbean is already making a difference by promoting sexual education in schools.

The open debate of faith-based organizations regarding their role in the fight against AIDS that took place last week shows us that nobody can consider him or herself a silent observer of other people's pain and suffering.

This conference is the first one in which progress has been reported both on ARV scale-up and prevention.

But we have to keep in mind that we still have five new infections for every two patients reached by ARV roll out. And we know that even doubling the number of patients reached by these scale up programmes would be insufficient to reach universal access.

This conference will be recognized as the one – in the words of Mike Cohen- in which prevention and treatment got married. We look forward to the offspring, which needs to be the closing of the gap between where we are today and what we need to achieve.

I hope that this conference will also be reminded as the one in which the false contradiction between AIDS Funding and Public Health strengthening has been solved. We need more funds for AIDS; we need more integration with sexual and reproductive health, Tuberculosis and Sexually Transmitted Infectious services.

**We need access for all to appropriate health care!**

We are glad to learn about our successes, but more than ever we need to be reminded that as we speak, thousands of human beings are contracting a preventable disease and thousands are dying from a treatable disease.

Behind statistics, behind each number, behind each graph or curve, there are millions of people waiting for support, treatment and care. Now it is in our hands -leaders, scientists and community- to keep our commitments on track and to fulfill these commitments we have made.

Acción universal YA, *UniversalAction Now* will be tested in Vienna.

The next Conference in 2010 will be an opportunity to generate a large accountability event for all of us.

I want to give a special thanks to all the people that have made this conference possible and those who have worked so hard to let us enjoy a great event and a great week.

First of all GRACIAS MEXICO: Thank you Federal Government of the Estados Unidos Mexicanos, thank you Government of Mexico City, but overall thank you lovely Mexican co-workers and volunteers for your tireless work and support and your enduring friendliness.

I also want to thank my co-chair and friend Luis Soto Ramirez. **Luis, it has been great to work with you in the planning of the Conference.**

Gracias, thanks to our partners of the UN family and the community for their patience and input in building this extraordinary meeting.

Gracias, thanks to our governmental and private donors as well as pharmaceutical industry.

This Conference would have never happened without the incredible professionalism and commitment of our Secretariat. Craig McClure, Mats Ahnlund, Edgar Gonzalez, are just some of the members of the joint Geneva- Mexico team who my respect and gratitude.

Again, thanks to all of you, thank you for being here, and thank you for helping us be today, as well as tomorrow, stronger together.

On your way back home be reminded that you can make a difference. People living with HIV and AIDS and millions more at risk need you to do your part of universal action now.

Have safe trips and spread the word **Accion Universal Ya!**