

World AIDS Vaccine Day

Parliamentarians' meeting on Wednesday, 16 May 2007

May 18 is the World AIDS Vaccine Day. As a prelude to the World AIDS Vaccine Day, a meeting of Parliamentarians was organized on May 16, 2007 at Park Hotel, Parliament Street, New Delhi. The Indian Medical Parliamentarians' Forum (IMPF) in association with International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) organized the Programme titled 'Working Together for an AIDS Vaccine', to support research and development initiative for a safe and effective AIDS vaccine.

In 1997, it was on this day that Bill Clinton, then President of the United States of America, made a speech calling for a vaccine for AIDS in ten years time.

A decade later, the search is still on. It is not known how long more it will take. But over the years, the search has become more urgent and intense, as commitments to funding and finding the vaccine have risen, as have the numbers of those infected with the virus.

The IMPF Members along with other Parliamentarians have pledged to fight the epidemic in whatever manner they can, including legislation to protect the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and battling discrimination and stigma, especially of people living with HIV/AIDS. The Forum also works to promote universal access to the highest quality of services for prevention, treatment and care. It urged increased commitment from government and private sectors towards research and development for new technologies and vaccine that could address the prevention needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

On the occasion, parliamentarians signed a [declaration](#) to strengthen existing prevention methods and support research and development of new preventive technologies including vaccines. The declaration highlights the growing concern of how HIV/AIDS could affect India's economic growth, and for the need to provide support to women and children, who are biologically and socially most vulnerable to the disease. It acknowledged the efforts of the government, civil society groups and corporate and international supporters in countering the HIV/AIDS challenge, but stressed that more needs to be done.

The Forum pledged to work towards greater representation of civil society, including the corporate sector, in the sphere of prevention and control of the HIV epidemic. It would also work along with the media to help remove information gaps and fight prejudice and stigma through awareness and education. It hoped the pharmaceutical industry could be motivated to develop new preventive technologies for HIV/AIDS, and help reduce costs of drugs and medicines for care and treatment.

IMPF Chairperson Dr. M. Jagannath, MP chaired the function; Vice Chairperson, Dr. Karan Singh Yadav, MP gave a welcome speech; and Dr. R. Senthil delivered an introductory speech highlighting and reaffirming the urgency of looking beyond existing mechanisms and support the AIDS vaccine research. MPs from high prevalent states noted the impact of the epidemic in their respective states and urged prompt action to address the challenges at the grassroots.

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, executive council member of IMPF, called for awareness and sex education among the youth who are vulnerable.

The Director General of the National AIDS control Organisation (NACO), K Sujatha Rao, gave an overview of the National AIDS control Programme (NACP) and the role of future preventive technologies like AIDS vaccines in the country's efforts to contain the epidemic.

Also present on the occasion were prominent parliamentarians Shri Robert Kharshiing MP, Prof. M. Ramadass MP, Dinesh Trivedi MP, Adv. Suresh Kurup MP, Dr. P.P. Koya MP, Dr. Ratan Singh Ajnala MP, Smt. Ranjeet Ranjan MP, Prof. P.J. Kurian MP, Dr. Chinta Mohan MP, Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam MP, Dr. Vallabhbhai Kathiria MP, Shri Narayan Chandra Borkataky MP, Dr. Laxminarayn Pandey MP, Shri Mani Charenamai MP, and Dr. Thokchom Meinya MP.