



Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

APEC Statement for the XVI International AIDS Conference

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum welcomes the opportunity provided by the XVI International AIDS Conference, held August 13-18, 2006, in Toronto, to bring together representatives from governments, NGOs, and the private sector to share information, identify solutions and advance our collective commitments in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Worldwide, more than 40.3 million people live with HIV, and since the epidemic began the disease has killed over 25 million people. HIV prevalence rates in the Asia-Pacific region are rising and in some countries the epidemic is intensifying. Given the high population levels in the region, even low HIV prevalence levels mean a large number of people are living with HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS remains a highly stigmatised condition across the Asia-Pacific region. Too often, prevention, treatment and care are still not readily available for populations affected by the epidemic. The vast majority of people at risk of HIV in the region are unaware of their HIV status. Fortright leadership on HIV/AIDS is required to combat stigma and to support efforts to rapidly scale up responses.

The potential impact of HIV/AIDS on the economic growth, development and social fabric of APEC economies is daunting. Failure to address HIV/AIDS will result in labour force losses that could impact an economy's productive capacity, and increase social protection and health costs.

In 2004, APEC Leaders endorsed a statement on "Fighting Against AIDS in APEC", in which they called for collective efforts by all stakeholders and committed to working together regionally and globally to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. In response, APEC has been working to make a contribution to efforts in the region focusing on both the management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and the links between migration and HIV/AIDS. APEC held two workshops in 2005 - a workshop in Thailand on the management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and a workshop in the Philippines on HIV/AIDS and migrant/mobile workers. These workshops highlighted the need to combat HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in the workplace and to encourage more involvement of the business sector in addressing the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS.

In the coming year, APEC will lead an initiative focused on improving the management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace, and identifying the policy environment and incentives that encourage business to create positive working conditions for employees living with HIV/AIDS. This work is critical to social and economic prosperity in the region.

APEC members look forward to the outcomes of this important meeting. We reiterate the commitments made by leaders, and stand firmly in support of global efforts to halt and reverse the HIV/AIDS epidemic.