



NEWSRELEASE

DATE: JUNE 30, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUBJECT:

***Europe new chair GNP+
GNP+ board adopts position on Injecting Drug
Users and Access to HIV treatment, gets forward
with Strategic Planning.***

GNP+ Europe assumes chair GNP+

The European chapter of the Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) has assumed the chair of the GNP+.

During the GNP+ board meeting in Amsterdam from June 20 to 24, Mr. Mauro Guarinieri from Italy was named acting chair person.

Mr. Guarinieri has been a member of the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) since 1998, with a particular involvement treatment activism, access to treatment and training activities in Central and Eastern Europe and in Central Asia. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of EATG since 2001 and chair of the EATG since last May. Mr. Guarinieri is also a member of the Advisory Group of the International Harm Reduction Development Program of the Open Society Institute and of the International Steering Committee of the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition.

As a former drug user living with HIV/AIDS since 1984, he has strong interest and expertise in the field of harm-reduction and drug users' rights in the context of antiretroviral therapy. Mr. Guarinieri is a person who can bridge gaps and forge coalitions and partnerships, excellent abilities to guide GNP+ through its current strategic planning process.

Mr. Guarinieri is being assisted by a new Secretariat Council consisting of Frika Chia Iskandar (Asia/Pacific region), Luis Leiva Friedman (Latin America region), Ted Gaudet (North America region).

GNP+ Board adopts position on Injecting Drug Users and Access to HIV treatment, gets forward with strategic planning

At the meeting the board of GNP+ discussed and adopted in principle a Position statement on Injecting Drug Users and Access to HIV treatment. By adopting the statement GNP+ express its strong support for harm reduction as the most effective means of preventing HIV and other blood borne infections among injection drug users,

and calls upon the United Nations, and particularly UNAIDS and its Cosponsors, to stand against any attempt to deny or limit access to life saving interventions such as needle and syringe exchange and other services for people who inject drugs.

Regarding Access to Antiretroviral Therapy, GNP+ believes that being an active drug user is not a valid criterion for denying individuals access to treatment and care, since antiretroviral therapy offers an opportunity to improve the prognosis and quality of life of all people living with HIV and AIDS. For HIV-positive injecting drug users, antiretroviral therapy may be also an incentive to take up contact with health care services, facilitating prevention, HIV voluntary counselling and testing as well as AIDS care, support and treatment. It is also an entry point for the treatment of drug use and other co-morbidities such as Tuberculosis, hepatitis B and C.

The position statement will shortly be available at www.gnpplus.net

In addition, the meeting had a strong focus on getting ahead with the strategic planning. During a two day workshop Peter Bousse and Dougan Frasier from South Africa assisted GNP+ board, regional coordinators and staff in working on a planning document which should become the base of GNP+ policy and structure for the period 2006 to 2010.

A new draft will be written and discussed at the next board meeting in Lima, Peru. The plan should be finalized before the end of 2005.

ENDS

NOT FOR PUBLICATION:

Contact information: More information, questions or quotes? Please contact Raoul Fransen, Acting International Coordinator or Martin Stolk, Communications Coordinator, at stolk@gnpplus.net or +31-20-423 4114 (GNP+ International Secretariat). All the material in this release may be reproduced freely, when GNP+ is mentioned as source.

Background information: The Global Network of People living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) is a global network for and by people with HIV/AIDS. The mission of GNP+ is to work to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS. GNP+ achieves its mission through advocacy, capacity building, and communications programs that draw from strategies based on: **ADVOCATING** for Inclusion, Visibility, Access, Rights; **LINKING** by Networking, Mentorship, Dialogue, Education; **SHARING** of Capacities, Knowledge, Strength, Resources.



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