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## Asia-Pacific nations wrap up UN forum with plan to advance progress on AIDS targets



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer (C) opens conference with the President of Fiji Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (L) and Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Kittiratt Na-Ranong. Photo: ESCAP

10 February 2012 –

Asia-Pacific nations at a United Nations meeting in Bangkok have agreed to boost cooperation and to develop regional accountability mechanisms and financing modalities to accelerate progress towards global HIV/AIDS commitments.

The agreed action plan comes at the end of three days of high-level talks by representatives of 34 Asia-Pacific nations, organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS ([UNAIDS](#)) and other UN co-sponsors.

The meeting marked the first time that officials from national health, justice, law enforcement, social development and drug control agencies in the region came together at a single forum, according to a news release issued by ESCAP.

They were joined by people living with HIV as well as representatives from populations most affected by HIV, including sex workers, people who use drugs, men who have sex with men and transgender people, to review the region's progress towards commitments on AIDS.

“This is Asia-Pacific at its best – showing leadership, fore-thinking and spirit of collaboration, underlining the powerful force of this region,” the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on HIV, Nafis Sadik, told delegates.

The action plan calls for increased collaboration between government ministries, including health, justice, public security, police and drug control in genuine partnership with civil society and key affected populations.

The meeting also reviewed strategies to move from a punitive to a more rights-based approach with regards to legal and policy barriers impeding access to HIV services. It also emphasized the importance of protecting the manufacture, export and import of life-saving generic medicines.

Participants reported significant progress in a number of areas, including reduction of new HIV infections, an increase in the number of people receiving anti-retroviral treatment and expansion of programmes to reach key affected populations most at risk.

An estimated 4.9 million people were living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific in 2009, according to a UNAIDS report launched last year. The majority of them are living in 11 countries: Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Thailand and Viet Nam.

The report found that the region has seen a 20 per cent drop in new infections between 2001 and 2009, and a three-fold increase in access to antiretroviral therapy since 2006. At the same time, it warned that this progress is threatened by an inadequate focus on key populations at higher risk of HIV infection and insufficient funding from both domestic and international sources.

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