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## **The AIDS Institute and Global Health Council Mark HIV Vaccine Awareness Day**

Global Health Council and The AIDS Institute are pleased to recognize the seventh annual HIV Vaccine Awareness Day today, May 18<sup>th</sup>. The two organizations sponsored a panel discussion, entitled "The Road to an AIDS Vaccine", today in Washington, D.C. on the challenges and prospects for developing an HIV vaccine in the near future.

Vaccine Awareness Day educates the public about the need for an HIV vaccine and commends those participating in HIV vaccine trials, providing an impetus for more HIV vaccine research and development.

"It has been 25 years since the first AIDS cases were reported and we still do not have a cure or a preventative vaccine," said Dr. Gene Copello, Executive Director of the AIDS Institute. "During the past 25 years, more than 25 million people have died of AIDS and 14,000 new infections occur each day throughout the world, creating an urgent and compelling need for an effective vaccine."

The jointly sponsored panel described various research activities and raised further awareness about the importance of finding an effective vaccine. It addressed two distinct approaches to an HIV/AIDS vaccine - a preventive vaccine given to people to prevent HIV infection and a therapeutic vaccine given to people with HIV/AIDS to treat and manage their infection.

The panel featured three prominent speakers, Seth Berkley, CEO, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), Mitchell Warren, Executive Director, AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) and Dr. Cuen-Yen Lau, Medical Officer, Division of AIDS, National Institutes of Health (NIH). Dr. Copello moderated the panel discussion.

"World AIDS Vaccine Day is a potent reminder of the critical role new AIDS preventative technologies play in a comprehensive and effective response to HIV/AIDS," said Seth Berkley of IAVI. "Although the international community has made great strides over the past decade to improve HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care, HIV infection rates continue to climb globally. We must redouble research and development efforts to find a vaccine - the best hope of ultimately ending the pandemic."

Dr. Nils Daulaire, President and CEO of the Global Health Council, concurs with Berkley's assessment, saying "if we are ever going to stop AIDS, the search for effective HIV/AIDS vaccines must remain a top goal."

Mitchell Warren, Executive Director of AVAC, meanwhile, cites the “particularly important role” communities and researchers in developing countries play in vaccine development.

“As more and larger trials are planned, we must continue to develop research, policy and advocacy infrastructure to support them, and ensure that vaccine development efforts are integrated with treatment and existing prevention programs,” he said.

The following statistics are furnished by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal agencies:

- About 46 million children, women and men world wide are living with HIV/AIDS
- More than 14 million children world wide have been orphaned by AIDS
- 1.1 million people in the United States are living with HIV/AIDS
- African-Americans account for more than half of new HIV infections.
- AIDS is the number one cause of death for African-Americans between the ages of 25 to 44

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