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ALP and TAC releases Statement on NHI

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National Health Insurance is necessary for equitable healthcare

Joint statement by the AIDS Law Project and the Treatment Action Campaign

It is unfortunate that the Democratic Alliance (DA) has chosen to use the human resource crisis in the public health sector to attack National Health Insurance (NHI). In a press release issued on 24 May 2009, the DA suggests that government should abandon its plans for NHI and focus instead on making ?the system that we have work more efficiently in order to liberate the funds needed to pay our health professionals better.?

In contrast to the DA?s position, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and AIDS Law Project (ALP) recognise that the resolution of the crisis in public health care is one of a number of key steps integral to laying the groundwork for the introduction of NHI. In our view, NHI ? in essence a funding mechanism that seeks to ensure the equitable distribution of human and financial resources ? must be built on the foundation of a strong public health system.

The aim of an NHI system is to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate quality health care services, regardless of ability to pay. This constitutional requirement is not and cannot be up for debate. Instead, what must be considered is how best to realise the constitutional vision. This calls for government ? led by the Department of Health ? to initiate and guide a consultation process on policy that leads to and informs legislative reform.

The TAC and ALP look forward to constructive engagement on NHI with government and other stakeholders. In so doing, we recognise that the public and private health sectors in South Africa are intertwined. Implicit in the DA?s press statement, however, is that the private sector should be left alone. We strongly disagree. Universal access to health care ? a defining feature of NHI ? cannot be achieved without appropriate regulation of the private sector.

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