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TAC LEADERS TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT UNIVERSAL ACCESS BECOMES A REALITY

By *moderator*
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In 2005, in Gleneagles Scotland, G8 governments committed to fund and support universal access to HIV treatment, care and support by the end of 2010. TAC is concerned about a lack of human and financial resources to be able to meet these targets and the international trend away from funding HIV/AIDS programmes.

Sub-Saharan Africa still faces many barriers to meeting universal access targets including: the lack of predictable and sustainable funding for health from governments and funders; human resource shortages and weak health systems; human rights violations and stigma that have reduced access to and uptake of HIV services and treatment.

Over the next two weeks TAC?s female leadership will be involved in a number of international activities to ensure that meeting universal access targets remains a global priority.

Thembelilhle Dlamini-Ngcoya, Acting Deputy General Secretary

Thembelilhle Dlamini-Ngcoya was appointed as TAC?s acting Deputy General Secretary in February 2010. She will hold the position until TAC?s National Congress 2010. She has previously worked as TAC?s KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Secretary. Zackie Achmat, former Deputy General Secretary, has stepped down to concentrate on his research and other activities. He will remain a member of the TAC secretariat and National Council till Congress 2011.

On the 2nd of March Thembelilhle will attend the UNAIDS launch of an Operational Plan for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV at the 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The event will bring together key leaders from the United Nations, governments of developed and developing countries and civil society. The event will be moderated by Mr Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director. Confirmed speakers include H.E. Melanne S. Verveer, US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, Ms Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator, and Ms Annie Lennox, artist and social and political activist.

The Operational Plan aims to place women and girls at the centre of the AIDS response. The Plan also calls on the UN to support country action in implementing the Plan in close consultation with governments and through partnerships with civil society and development partners. TAC?s presence at the launch is critical to demonstrating the need to advance the rights and health of women and girls through the AIDS response.

Thembelihle will also attend the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly until the 6th of March.

Vuyiseka Dubula-Majola, General Secretary and Nonkosi Khumalo, Chairperson.

On the 5th of March, TAC?s General Secretary, Vuyiseka Dubula-Majola, and Chairlperson, Nonkosi Khumalo, will receive the John M Lloyd Foundation Leadership Award in Los Angeles. The two will share the award which intends to recognize develop and empower AIDS advocacy leaders that have not been extensively recognised.

The award also recognises their leadership at the helm of two preeminent organisations in South Africa that are working to curb the HIV/AIDS epidemic, namely the Treatment Action Campaign and the AIDS Law Project. The award gives an unrestricted shared grant to both individuals and the organisations they work for. TAC is extremely proud of its leaders and that their tireless efforts are being rewarded.

On the 9th of March, Vuyiseka will attend a high level Universal Access Meeting in London. The meeting has been called at the request of the UK Minister of State, Gareth Thomas, who was the UK lead minister when the G8 Gleneagles Commitment to Universal Access was made.

The meeting seeks to ensure that we do not lose sight of the commitments made at Gleneagles and also aims at galvanising interest amongst key stakeholders to ensure that HIV and AIDS is not forgotten during all the upcoming international forums - including the G8, G20 and the UN MDG Summit in September. The meeting will have a regional focus on the hyper endemic countries of Southern Africa and countries in Eastern Africa where infections are rising.

Vuyiseka has been invited to attend and address this meeting where they will discuss amongst other things, progress made so far, the gaps and how collectively we can use opportunities in 2010 to continue to accelerate progress to meet universal access and the millennium development goal 6.

Vuyiseka has also been invited by the Chairman of the United States House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Mr Donald Payne, to testify before the Committee on Foreign Affairs at a hearing on US Investments in HIV/AIDS: Opportunities and Challenges ahead. Vuyiseka will respond to questions including: what has been the effectiveness of US investments and PEPFAR in HIV/AIDS in South Africa? and what has been the impact of PEPFAR on maternal and child health in South Africa?

These events will give all three women the opportunity to participate and engage in global forums to highlight the challenges and success that South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa has had in the fight against HIV/AIDS. It is also an important time to remind global leaders and funders that HIV/AIDS remains an emergency in many sub-Saharan countries and that universal access targets must be met.

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