



S. Lewin
Closing session speech

Embargoed until 15.30 AEST, Friday 25 July, 2014

The lord mayor of Melbourne, the honourable Robert Doyle

Sir Bob Geldoff.

Distinguished guests,

I'd like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Kulin nation – and their elders past and present.

On Friday July 19th, our world changed when we awoke to the absolutely devastating news of MH17. The shock and horror that spread across the community of nations and our conference community was palpable.

It was a horrific reminder of the perils of our global interdependence, so eloquently explored by President Clinton with us earlier this week.

But I think this week has demonstrated what makes the HIV movement so inspiring – we've faced and overcome adversity since the very early days of the epidemic – and this week was no exception.

Over the last 5 days, the intense dialogue, the demonstrations, the debates and the commitment to continue and strengthen our work are the best tribute we could ever make to our 6 colleagues and all of those aboard MH 17.

The future, lies in unity and not division.

This week, we have heard of all the great progress but that there is still much work to be done.

In order for us to change an epidemic to low level infection, we need an individualised approach to address key hot spots; we need a strong focus on specific geographic areas and key affected populations that continue to experience the highest numbers of infections. We need to recognise that one size will not fit all in our response.

Now more than ever we need an increase in funding to do it.

Now is not the time to not slacken the pace.

This week we have also heard that, even after 30 years, stigma and discrimination continues to remain a major barrier to implementing what we know works. If anything, this is getting worse in many parts of the world. Michael Kirby powerfully reminded us to hold governments accountable and to celebrate and applaud the great heroes who continue their work in unacceptably hostile environments such as Russia, Uganda and Nigeria.

This is why we launched the Melbourne AIDS2014 Declaration – which makes a clear and strong stand against those who would stigmatise, criminalise and discriminate against people based solely on their sexual preference or for engaging in sex work or for using drugs.

To date we have had 3742 signatures but I know – that we have had 13,300 participants here this week and 6000 non-delegates visiting the Global Village.

So where are all your signatures???? I urge you to sign the declaration. As Sir Bob Geldof reminded us – one person's voice can make a difference - but the thousands and millions of voices is what politicians hear

Finally – we heard about the advances and significant challenges in finding a path to achieving sustained HIV remission. Or a way to allow patients to safely stop antiretrovirals and keep the virus under control. We now know this is possible – as we learnt from the Mississippi baby - but there is much work to be done to translate these lessons to feasible interventions that will be scalable and accessible. Our work on finding a cure must also never leave anyone behind

So what will be the enduring legacy for AIDS 2014. After all that's why we are all here – to make a difference.

Nationally, I am incredibly proud of the Australian AIDS 2014 legacy statement. The statement articulates a very bold commitment from all our state and territory health ministers to end new HIV infections in Australia by 2020 and a commitment to maintain what we're doing well but do it better and do it globally – not just nationally.

As Sir Bob Geldof made very clear – Australia is one of the richest countries in the world and we made a promise to the poorest most vulnerable people in the world, which we are not fulfilling. We must do more.

AIDS 2014 has been a great success – in what we all think were extraordinary circumstances. But conferences such as this can only happen with the contribution of many, many people and highly effective partnerships. A few key people must be recognised and thanked

First, I would like to thank my wonderful International Chair Françoise Barré-Sinoussi for her support over the past two years but also for her support during this extremely challenging week. Her leadership of the IAS over the past 2 years has been an inspiration for all.

I would like to acknowledge the extensive support we have had for the conference from across Australia – at every level. From all my colleagues - the unbelievably committed clinicians and researchers and members of affected communities and at every level of government.

A very special thank you to the Federal Australian government including both the departments of health and foreign affairs and trade, the government of the State of Victoria and the City of Melbourne.

As you will all agree Melbourne really did put on a show this week – and I am so proud of what we've achieved.

I would also like to thank the Melbourne Convention Bureau and the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre for putting on a truly professional show in what are world class facilities.

A very warm thank you to the IAS and the secretariat, all the members of the conference organising committees, the youth workforce and our wonderful volunteers.

And lastly, I thank all of you here tonight for bringing your work, your stories, your courage and your passion to Melbourne.

Together we have and will continue to make a difference to see the end of HIV

Thank you.