

**XVIII International AIDS Conference
Closing Session
Remarks by Dr. Brigitte Schmied, AIDS 2010 Local Co-Chair
23 July 2010
Vienna, Austria**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sadly, this is the last session of the 18th International AIDS Conference. Over 19,300 people from 193 countries have participated in AIDS 2010, with many more joining in activities in the Global Village.

Together, we attended 248 sessions, reviewed more than 6,000 abstracts and communicated with 12,324 of our closest friends on Facebook!

I would like to thank the AIDS 2010 Secretariats, as well as the 770 volunteers, for all of their hard work this week.

I would also like to thank Julio and the other members of the Conference Coordinating Committee.

When we look back on Vienna, what will we remember?

First, I hope you will recall having enjoyed your stay. We had a strong programme, hot weather, and at times only weak air conditioning in the session rooms. Still, it was an energetic conference, based on our shared commitment to universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2015.

We also leave Vienna with a new resolve to hold our political leaders accountable for the commitments they have made to universal access.

A key theme of the conference has been the critical importance of human rights in the global response to AIDS. The memory of the human rights march, with thousands of us, along with Annie Lennox, calling for the basic dignity to live our lives safe and free of discrimination, will remain with me as I'm sure it will with you too.

The AIDS 2000 conference in Durban, South Africa will always be remembered as the moment when the world realized that it is our collective responsibility to make sure the benefits of life-saving HIV treatments reach everyone, regardless of where they live.

The Vienna conference will similarly be remembered as the dawn of a new era in South Africa, reflected in the stirring remarks of Deputy President Motlanthe and Minister Motsoaledi.

Together, we also sent a loud message that people who use drugs should not be criminalized, that they deserve access to treatment and proven prevention strategies!

We emphasized again how prevention is more than safer sex, that it also includes structural changes to reduce vulnerability.

Michele Sidibé spoke of the necessity of a "prevention revolution." While together in Vienna, we heard about the exciting results of the CAPRISA microbicides trial, which is definitely a part of that revolution. Hopefully, soon, we will have a practical and effective HIV prevention tool that puts women in charge, independent of their partners.

It was a great, conference, filled with glorious sunshine. However, for many of us, there was also a bit of a looming shadow called `Austria and the Global Fund`. I'm happy to say that this cloud appears willing to disappear in the upcoming months.

On this point I would like to report on a very promising conversation I had with officials in the Austrian government yesterday. In our conversation, I was told that AIDS 2010 has had an important impact on the Austrian Government's understanding of the epidemic and its role. Based on new insights gained this week, there are strong indications that Austria will make a new contribution to the Global Fund in the near future.

I know I speak on behalf of all Austrians here today when I say that we look forward to this development and are prepared to take whatever steps are needed to make this a reality.

I hope you all will leave here with as much hope as I have and that we can continue our work as scientists and advocates to convert into reality the ideas we have developed and exchanged this week in Vienna.

Thank you.