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**NEW EVIDENCE ON MATERNAL HEALTH PROVES AGAIN THAT BROAD
ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT PAYS HUGE HEALTH DIVIDENDS**

**Sharp Drop in Maternal Deaths Provides Further Strong Support
for Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment and Care**

16 April 2010 (Geneva, Switzerland) - The International AIDS Society (IAS) today welcomed the new study, "Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980—2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5," published in the 12 April online edition of *The Lancet*. The new report documents significant reductions in maternal deaths worldwide and the central role that access to HIV antiretroviral therapy (ART) plays in achieving broad health gains for women. Access to ART is cited in the study as a major contributor to the reduced rates of death among women.

Despite progress in scaling up access to treatment and care, HIV remains the leading global killer of women of reproductive age and one of the leading overall causes of adult and child deaths in low- and middle-income countries. According to UNAIDS, women comprise about half of all people living with HIV worldwide and three quarters of people ages 15-24 living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Broad access to ART has reduced morbidity and mortality among women, reduced vertical transmission and improved the health of infants and children. Yet the estimated 4 million people receiving ART in low- and middle-income countries represents only about one-third of the number of people who need access to HIV therapy today.

"This very important study proves yet again that concerted, evidence-based action to improve the health of women with HIV works," said Julio Montaner, President of the IAS. "Leaders of the G8 nations and every United Nations member state have pledged to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by this year, 2010. This study gives us strong additional evidence as to why this pledge must be met as quickly as possible. As well as the impact on women's health, HIV programs reduce tuberculosis and other infectious diseases; support the training of health workers and strengthen health systems in the poorest countries."

"New data on decreases in maternal deaths show once again that access to HIV prevention, treatment and care is essential to a comprehensive approach to improving the health of poor and vulnerable people," said IAS Executive Director Robin Gorna. "HIV services do not compete with other health priorities. They support them by reducing all-cause mortality; improving maternal health; improving child health by preventing and treating HIV disease in children and reducing diarrheal and other diseases through safe breastfeeding. This study reminds us that those who seek to pit maternal health against HIV in a competition for resources are deeply misguided."

Even as critical evidence about the broad and multiple benefits of universal access to HIV services pours in, however, IAS officials pointed out that donor nations are falling billions of dollars short on pledges to achieve universal access to HIV services. Ill-timed and shortsighted

cutbacks threaten to reduce access to HIV prevention and treatment just as increased action is needed to build on progress such as that cited in this new study.

“As we celebrate the significant but incomplete victory outlined in this report, the global community must also increase its voice to demand that all nations meet the pledge to achieve universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support,” said Robin Gorna. “Everyone concerned about global health and development should visit the web page of the IAS “Universal Access Now” campaign (<http://www.iasociety.org/universalaccessnow.aspx>) to help us demand that every woman, man and child in need receives quality HIV services and the multiple benefits that universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support provides.”

About the IAS:

The International AIDS Society (IAS) is the world's leading independent association of HIV professionals, with 14,000 members from 190 countries working at all levels of the global response to AIDS. Our members include researchers from all disciplines, clinicians, public health and community practitioners on the frontlines of the epidemic, as well as policy and programme planners. The IAS is the custodian of the biennial International AIDS Conference, which will be held in Vienna, Austria from 18 to 23 July 2010.

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