

– Media Release –
May 11, 2006

***Church Leaders Urge Prime Minister Harper to
Demonstrate Leadership on the HIV and AIDS Crisis***

In a letter to the Prime Minister sent this week, Canadian church leaders listed six Canadian initiatives that would make a substantial difference in the HIV and AIDS crisis. These included debt cancellation, untying debt remission from conditions that diminish the provision of health care, a 5% contribution to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, and changes to Canada's pharmaceutical laws.

Canada has three important opportunities to demonstrate leadership on the HIV and AIDS crisis in the next three months: the United Nations Review of Progress on the Implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS from May 31 to June 2, 2006; the Group of Eight Summit in St. Petersburg, Russia from July 15 to 17, 2006; and when Canada hosts the Sixteenth International AIDS Conference from August 13-18, 2006 in Toronto.

From August 10 to 12 the Canadian Council of Churches is hosting an Ecumenical Pre-Conference leading up to the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto. Nearly 500 delegates from around the world have registered so far.

The letter is signed by all 20 church leaders representing all the members of the Canadian Council of Churches. The Canadian Council of Churches is the largest ecumenical body in Canada. Our members include 20 churches of Anglican, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions; together we represent 85 per cent of Christian Canadians who profess adherence to a church.

For a full list of the church leaders, please see the copy of the letter or visit our HIV/AIDS webpage at: <http://www.ccc-cce.ca/english/justice/hiv.htm>.

For more information contact:

Peter Noteboom,
Associate Secretary, Justice and Peace
Phone: 416-972-9494 x 26
E-mail: noteboom@ccc-cce.ca