

The 16th ICASA Conference Opens in Addis Ababa in the Presence of Prime Minister
Meles Zenawi and President George W. Bush

PRESS RELEASE

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ADDIS ABABA-- The International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) was officially opened yesterday (December 4, 2011) at Addis Ababa's Millennium Hall in the presence of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi; former United States President, George W. Bush; UNAIDS Executive Director, Mr. Michel Sidibe'; and Mayor of Addis Ababa, Mr. Kuma Demeksa. The theme of the 16th ICASA Conference, which will run through December 8 is, "Own, Scale-up and Sustain."

The conference assembles 10,000 delegates from around the world working in the fields of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and includes political leaders, scientists and civil society representatives. The conference will facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices concerning Africa's response to HIV/AIDS, link scientists with national and community leaders, and serve as a platform for mobilization of Africa's leadership and its international partners in responding to HIV/AIDS.

During yesterday's opening ceremony Prime Minister Meles Zenawi presented President George W. Bush with an Outstanding Leadership Award from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The award was presented to President Bush in recognition of his important contributions to the battle against HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia and across Africa. Under President Bush's leadership, the United States launched the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which allocated \$15 billion for the fight against HIV/AIDS between 2003 and 2008. Ethiopia was one of 15 focus countries which were beneficiaries of PEPFAR.

The selection of Addis Ababa to host Africa's largest conference on HIV/AIDS reaffirms its status as Africa's diplomatic capital.