

## Editorial

# *International Aids Conference in Brazil*

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In 1998, the National Co-ordination of STD/Aids returned to us the BID for the official presentation of Brazil to host the XV International Aids Conference, Rio 2004. At that time such proposal was presented to the National Committee of Aids, but unfortunately there was no echo and the papers were returned in blank.

We decided to face the challenge and make a new start.

Going to Geneva, we officially handed in the BID so that Brazil could host the Congress. The home pages [www.uff.br/dst/](http://www.uff.br/dst/) and [www.uf.aidsrio2004](http://www.uf.aidsrio2004) gave us the support we expected.

On the occasion we made public the following texts:

"Dear Dr. Lars Kallings, Executive Secretary of IAS,  
Considering that:

- In Brazil there is a very intensive work at the Universities, Research Institutes, NGOs, and especially at the Ministry of Health - National Co-ordination of STD/Aids, which together with the Health Secretaries of States and Municipalities guarantee totally FREE OF CHARGE tests and anti-retroviral therapy to all population,
- Latin America is the thirtieth largest world population infected with Aids, and with very well organized NGOs, *we urge to make a very well organized Conference for the COMMUNITY.*
- The figures of orphan children from Aids are already 100,000 (UNAIDS),
- Life expectation has decreased by 5.3 years since Aids occurred,
- There is political and economic stability (inflation is less than 5% a year),
- A lot of international investments are turning to Brazil and other countries in Latin America, such as Argentina, Uruguay and Chile,
- In 1992, Rio de Janeiro hosted the UNCED - United National Conference Environment and Development, receiving at the same time 147 chiefs of state and 15,000 participants at the Rio Convention Center,
- In April 1998, at the same Convention Center, the World Congress of Cardiology brought to Rio 20,000 participants from 124 countries,

Bringing Aids 2004 to Rio would be important not only for the millions of infected people, but also to the whole population, *160 million inhabitants*, by creating a forum for discussion and breaking myths and prejudices. This will bring hope for a brighter future.

With this in mind, we would like to say that our people need the most advanced international community not only to speak about our problems, but actually act on them, bringing technical,

scientific and social progress to our health specialists and educators, our students and citizens.

North America has already hosted this important Conference many times, as well as Europe, Australia and Asia. In two years from now we will be in Africa and then back to Europe. Meet me in Rio 2004. WHY NOT?"

During the event in Geneva, specifically for Brazilians, we divulged the following:

### "OPEN LETTER

*International Aids Conference, Rio 2004*

Dear Colleagues,

Since 1989 Brazil has been trying to host the International Aids Conference. We were very close to it, but unfortunately we had no chance. There were misunderstandings in communication and we did not stick to it completely.

Today our time has changed. The National Co-ordination of STD/Aids - Ministry of Health, together with Universities, Research Institutes, Secretaries of Health from States and Municipalities, NGOs, Foundations, Private and Governmental Enterprises, Medical Associations are all integrated in actions to turn our work fearless and highly productive.

When an event of such an extent and technical-scientific and social importance comes to a country, everyone profits. Researchers profit with a great interchange, professors by acquisition of knowledge, health professionals with experience and students profit, too, once they can participate more actively in academic studies.

Also the population profits with cultural exchange, but, above all, patients gain, for their problems are closely discussed, diminishing prejudices and adding knowledge to their problems as well as raising their hopes for better days.

Colleagues, no matter who breaks loose the proposal, no matter where the event will take place - Brazil deserves to be the winner.

We believe Latin America, represented by Brazil, will be able to debate the subject, and with the mediation and the guidance of the National Co-ordination of STD/Aids and the Ministry of Health we will be able to gather a group where all segments will be represented."

Unfortunately we were not united for the cause and again misunderstanding in communication and interpretation - mainly from Brazilians, weakened the project. Canada, for the third time, was proposed to hold the Conference in 2004.

However, those who have been to such Conferences know the strength of the Brazilian Delegation, both in number of participants and scientific/community activities, human rights, among others.

Recently, at the *XIII Aids International Conference*, in Durban, South Africa, there were 267 Brazilian participants. It was the 6<sup>th</sup> largest delegation, just after the United States (2,602), South Africa (2,539) the United Kingdom (622), France (444) and Spain (313); Barcelona will host the next Conference, in 2002.

Almost 100 papers and Brazilian presentations were delivered at the Conference in Durban. Several Brazilian representatives were brilliant in their oral presentations, round tables, debates and plenary sessions. Participants from other countries referred to Brazilian experiences in their speeches, always praising the work developed in Brazil.

We also want to mention the outstanding efficiency in the organization of the Conference in Durban. The South Africans were an example to the world: with determination and competence, it is possible to overcome the most difficult situations.

Today we see our Brazil firm and strong. We have learnt to join our differences. We are ready to organize a large event. The work developed by the Programs of STD/Aids (at National, State and Municipal levels) together with study centres, research, care, NGOs, enterprise councils and the whole civil society, is mentioned as an example by the UNAIDS and even by the General Secretary of UNO.

The understructure conditions of Brazil, especially in Rio de Janeiro, are prepared for such an event. As an example, we can mention Carnival in Rio, which for five days had more than 350,000 tourists. One third, at least were foreigners. Not mentioning its natural beauty, Rio de Janeiro is well organized in tourism and specialized services, which makes it capable to host national and international events and Congresses of any kind.

The International Airport of Rio de Janeiro/Galeão – Antonio Carlos Jobim - has two runways of 4.8km each, where an average of 230 flights land and take off every day. Twenty-four airlines link regularly Rio de Janeiro to the main capital cities in the world. It is possible to fly from Brazil to 80 different countries using the connections offered by well-known airlines. Rio is the most visited city in Brazil. Over 15 million passengers use the Airport every year. It is linked to down-town and the south area by an express via – Linha Vermelha – and the route to the main hotels takes no more than 20 minutes. The Airport is also linked

to the West side, where the largest Convention Centre in Latin America – RioCentro - is located. It takes 20 minutes to get there by a new express route – Linha Amarela.

The city offers 23,000 hotel rooms (not including flats, youth hostels, University accommodation, lodgings) and, in a short time, this number will add 5,000 rooms in hotels which are being built, mainly in Barra da Tijuca. This wide range of hotels include the most famous international chains and excellent national hotels. Several of these hotels have Convention Centres which can hold up to 2,200 participants.

RioCentro, the largest Convention Centre in Latin America, has an area of 100,209 square meters, with 5 pavilions available for exhibition.

Versatile and with all necessary facilities, RioCentro is located in Barra da Tijuca, one of the most modern areas in Rio, with lots of good shopping-centres, restaurants, theatres and a lovely beach. Among others, RioCentro has hosted the World Congress of Cardiology in 1998, with over 19,000 participants from all over the world and the Americas Telecom (for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in Rio) in April 2000, gathering 27,000 people.

The ICCA – International Congress & Convention Association classifies Rio de Janeiro among the ten best places in the world to host international events.

Having in mind the social extent of this Conference, we are quite sure that the State Government would support a holiday during the event. Public transport could offer more buses from all areas to RioCentro. This was done when ROCK IN RIO III took place – one million two thousand people in seven days were present at the festival in an area next to RioCentro.

The IAS admits the importance of having the Conference in South America. Brazil, obviously, is the main candidate, even for the year 2004. Canada could acknowledge our effort and struggle in fighting Aids, giving us the chance of hosting the next Congress.

South America thanks in advance.

**Mauro Romero Leal Passos, MD, PhD**

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