IAPAC Mourns Loss of Friends, Colleagues on Malaysian Flight MH17

WASHINGTON, DC (July 18, 2014; updated July 19, 2014) – The International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC) expresses its condolences to the families of the victims of the tragic crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 on July 17, 2014, among them friends and colleagues in the global response to HIV/AIDS, including former IAPAC Trustee Joep MA Lange, MD, PhD (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands).

“The tragedy that is unfolding in eastern Ukraine as a result of the criminal act perpetrated against flight MH17 is truly unspeakable,” said IAPAC President José M. Zuniga, PhD, MPH. “Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of the 298 people who lost their lives aboard flight MH17, among them mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, and friends and colleagues whose lives were cut short by a senseless act of terrorism that is touching countless people worldwide.”

According to the International AIDS Society (IAS), six of the 298 passengers were clinicians, researchers, and civil society members traveling to the 20th International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2014) in Melbourne, Australia. Dr. Lange and his partner, Jacqueline van Tongeren, are confirmed to have been on the ill-fated flight.

Dr. Lange was a leading global researcher who made significant contributions to the state-of-the-science of HIV medicine. In addition, he was a clinician-activist who fought to ensure that the benefits of continuing progress in the field of HIV medicine were made available to all men, women, and children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS worldwide. Dr. Lange’s loss is acutely felt by IAPAC, of which he was an honorary lifetime member. He served as a member of the IAPAC Board of Trustees for six years, and was serving as an advisor at-large as well as member of the Editorial Advisory Board of the Journal of the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care.

Dr. Zuniga, who learned of the tragedy upon his arrival in Melbourne, added that as recently as last week, Dr. Lange was engaged in dialogue with IAPAC’s senior leadership about a new global initiative to make AIDS-related deaths and new HIV infections exceedingly rare.

“Joep was a brilliant researcher and passionate clinician-activist who would not accept the status quo of a world in which too few people have access to life-saving HIV medications. He embodied the ethos of medical humanitarianism, whether at home in Amsterdam or abroad,” said Dr. Zuniga. “He was also a friend and mentor. During his several years as an IAPAC Trustee and as an advisor at-large, Joep influenced our thinking, fueling a sense of urgency based on his belief that every life has infinite value and that time is not our friend given such an unrelenting foe as HIV.”

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