



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2008

OPENING CEREMONY OF INTERNATIONAL AIDS CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL TO BE HELD IN HAITI IN MAY 2009

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI – Promoteurs Objectif Zéro Sida (POZ) and the Global Health Council announced today that Haiti will be the site of the Opening Ceremony of the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial in 2009. The Candlelight Memorial is the world's oldest and largest grassroots mobilization campaign for HIV/AIDS awareness. POZ and the Global Health Council will co-host the Opening Ceremony in Port-au-Prince next May with the support of other partner organizations and the Ministry of Health.

The Candlelight Memorial, an international program managed by the Global Health Council, is led by community organizations in more than 100 countries around the world. The program commemorates those who have been lost to the disease and expresses solidarity with people who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. The Candlelight Memorial also creates opportunity for communities to educate people about the disease and advocate for improvements in HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment programs.

POZ has organized Candlelight Memorial programs with other partners in Haiti for several years, and 2009 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Candlelight Memorial in this country.

“The Global Health Council staff looked at dozens of Candlelight Coordinators around the world,” said Dr. Nils Daulaire, president of the Global Health Council, “but it was clear that POZ was a very strong partner with an exemplary reputation in the field of HIV/AIDS support programs. We are honored to have the opportunity to work with POZ in Haiti and to highlight the challenges and the progress being made by a Caribbean country.”

The International AIDS Candlelight Memorial began in 1983 when a few men in San Francisco decided to hold a memorial and march to bring public attention to a mysterious disease causing early and unexplained deaths. Over the years the Candlelight Memorial spread beyond the United States. In May 2008, the Candlelight Memorial was commemorated by small and large groups in over 1,200 events held in 115 countries, including Haiti.

The 2009 Opening Ceremony of the Candlelight Memorial will include the lighting of the official candle to launch memorial programs being held around the world.

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The Global Health Council is the world's largest membership alliance of public health organizations and professionals dedicated to saving lives by improving health throughout the world. The Council's members work in 140 countries on six continents. www.globalhealth.org

Promoteurs Objectif Zéro Sida is a nongovernmental organization that focuses on reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Haiti. A recent recipient of the Red Ribbon Award by UNAIDS, POZ develops outreach programs, conducts advocacy activities, and manages an AIDS hotline. www.pozsida.org

*For more information about the **International AIDS Candlelight Memorial**, please go to www.candlelightmemorial.org or contact the International Coordinator, Todd Lawrence at tlawrence@globalhealth.org.*