



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Hélène Rossert, First NGO Representative to be Chosen as Vice Chair

At the March board meeting, the Global Fund board elected Hélène Rossert as Vice Chair. She is the first NGO representative, and the first woman, to serve in either of the top two board positions. (For more on the election itself, see GFO Issue 20, available at www.aidspan.org/gfo/archives.)

Dr. Rossert is a medical and public health doctor with more than 15 years' experience working on HIV/AIDS. As Director General of AIDES, the largest French AIDS organization, she directs 1,500 staff and volunteers in France, Africa, and elsewhere.

In a recent interview conducted by GFO, Dr. Rossert said that she stood for the position because “when you run for election, the idea is not necessarily to win, but to raise your voice, and to say that you have things to push forward.” She said she particularly wanted to make a stand on behalf of NGOs in developing countries – including those both inside and outside CCMs – which too often “are not able to participate in any democratic process.”

Speaking of NGOs as a whole, she said, “it’s time for us to make a difference.”

As Vice Chair, Dr. Rossert will take over the running of board meetings when the Chair, Tommy Thompson of the USA, is not available. But more significantly, she will work closely with the Chair on many decisions that have to be made between board meetings. In addition, she will serve as chair of the Ethics Committee, which is currently examining the board’s conflicts of interest policy.

Dr. Rossert said she will continue to pursue her particular interest in the Fund's resource mobilization needs. "I will try as much as I can, as a European, to reinforce the European investment," she said. As for US donations, "I'm not very sure I can do anything," she said, but added that she will not hesitate to use "my pen and my tongue, to write and say what I think about it."

Noting that the Fund hasn't got enough money to reach the WHO's stated goal of putting 3 million people on HIV/AIDS treatment by the end of 2005, and that there are many more people than that who need treatment, Dr. Rossert said that while, as Vice Chair, she agrees with Dr. Feachem that the Fund needs to reach a level of seven or eight billion dollars a year, "as an activist I say there is much more needed."

Dr. Rossert praised the board's commitment, commenting that "All the members are actively involved in it, which is something unique." She said that she hopes there will be a board meeting before the end of the year that will devote its time to looking at what is happening in the field, including the status of CCMs. "I think this will help the process of looking at funding," she said, "because the donors really need to have pressure from the field, I believe, to raise their [donation] figures. Otherwise, I think fundraising is going to be difficult."

Dr. Rossert's term of office (both as a board member and as Vice Chair) lasts until March 2005. At that time, the board will choose a new Chair from among the seven board members who then represent developing countries and the two who represent NGOs, and a new Vice Chair from among the seven board members who represent developed countries and the two who represent foundations and corporations. Dr. Rossert said she will not be a candidate for Chair at that time.

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