



Independent observer
of the Global Fund

Support Group Launched in USA for Global Fund

A support group for the Global Fund named “Friends of the Global Fight” has been launched in the USA. It will be led by Jack Valenti, who has served for 38 years as chief executive of the Motion Picture Association of America. Mr. Valenti became famous for his effective and highly-paid lobbying work in Washington DC, often gaining the support, or at least the interest, of members of Congress by inviting them to private viewings of major movies.

Valenti is respected by a wide range of US politicians. “Jack is the ultimate in public relations,” Senator Orrin Hatch has been quoted as saying. “There’s no doubt he’s a Democrat, but he’s never let me down as a conservative Republican.”

Mr. Valenti will now encourage members of Congress and the Administration to support increased US contributions to the Fund. The Wall Street Journal reports that the Fund’s Dr. Feachem is looking for \$1.2 billion from the US in 2005, one third of the Fund’s needs. At present, the US has promised only one sixth of that.

Under Mr. Valenti’s leadership, Friends of the Global Fight will also seek to make the Fund much better known among members of the public, so they will both make their own donations and support increased governmental contributions. Wealthy donors will also be targeted.

Friends of the Global Fight was launched at a star-studded event in Washington DC last week co-hosted by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and Minority Leader Tom Daschle. Attendees viewed a new nine-minute film about the Global Fund narrated by movie star Tom Hanks. (People in the US “may not have heard of HIV, or even malaria or TB,” Mr. Valenti told the Wall Street Journal, “but they’ve heard of Tom Hanks.”) The film starts with the words “Imagine 23 fully loaded 747s crashing...every day. That’s AIDS.”

The film will be distributed to thousands of US schools and churches as part of an effort to get viewers involved through actions and financial contributions.

Mr. Valenti will work for Friends of the Global Fight on a part-time basis, with a compensation package that has not yet been finalized. Under him will be an office of five staff led by Anil Soni, former senior advisor to the Global Fund's Executive Director, Richard Feachem. Valenti is 82 years old, and Soni is 27.

Initial costs for establishing Friends of the Global Fund were provided by its founder, Ed Scott, a technology entrepreneur and philanthropist. The Global Fund will not provide grants or fees to the organization.

One project that has already been supported by Friends of the Global Fight is "Investing in Our Future" (www.investinginourfuture.org), a new web site described as "a project of the Global Fund" that is "the premier, online destination" for people to quickly learn, act and give to the battle against AIDS, TB and malaria.

Friends of the Global Fight has prepared some documents, available at its web site (www.theglobalfight.org), that describe achievements of various Global Fund grants.

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