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Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network Appoints New Executive Director

Montréal (7 September 2004) – **The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network is very pleased to announce the appointment of Joanne Csete as its new Executive Director, effective 1 November 2004. The announcement was made today by Kevin Midbo, President of the Legal Network's Board of Directors.**

Joanne is currently Director of the HIV/AIDS and Human Rights Program at Human Rights Watch (HRW) in New York, and has been a member of the Legal Network's Board of Directors since 2002. She will replace Ralf Jürgens, who has been Executive Director of the Network since 1998. Ralf announced in late April that he would move on from his position (see the Network's [communiqué](#) of 26 April).

"We are thrilled that Joanne will be heading up the organization," said Kevin. "Many Network members know Joanne for the brilliance, passion and dedication she has brought as a member of the Network's Board, and her significant contributions in the human rights field are well known around the world. Joanne's close collaboration with the Board and with Ralf will help provide for a smooth transition as she moves into her new role."

At Human Rights Watch, Joanne has supervised research and advocacy on a wide range of human rights violations related to the AIDS epidemic. Her program has been instrumental in defending and promoting the human rights of women and girls, drug users, and children in countries around the world.

Joanne was previously Chief of Policy and Programs at the UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa in Nairobi, where she

worked on AIDS programs and policies. Prior to that, she lived and worked in Africa for over ten years, focusing mainly on public health and nutrition programs in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She holds an undergraduate degree in economics from Princeton, a Master's degree in Public Health from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Public Health Nutrition from Cornell University.

"I look forward to the privilege – and the adventure – of working with the Legal Network's excellent staff and Board, and with the membership," said Joanne. "It is my fondest hope that although we lose Ralf's outstanding leadership, the Legal Network will maintain the courage and integrity that he helped make a hallmark of its work. I am humbled by the big shoes to fill!"

"This is a dream come true," said Ralf Jürgens. "The Network, our members, and the fight against HIV/AIDS and for human rights will benefit from the leadership, energy and expertise Joanne will provide as the Network's new Executive Director."

Since its founding in 1992, the Legal Network has taken a leading role in research, education and advocacy aimed at protecting and promoting the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and those vulnerable to this disease. As Executive Director, Joanne will lead a team of 12 staff in the Network's offices in Montréal and Toronto and pursue a wide range of initiatives aimed at influencing policy and legal responses to HIV/AIDS in Canada and globally.

"We hope all Network members, as well as the many partners and organizations with whom we collaborate, will join us in welcoming Joanne to her new position," said Ralf. "Joanne will take the helm at a very exciting period in the history of the Legal Network and of the fight against HIV/AIDS, and will provide strong leadership and vision."

Ralf will continue in his position until Joanne starts on 1 November. The Network is holding its Annual General Meeting in Montreal from 10 to 12 September and will soon be launching a report, co-authored by Ralf, on prison-based needle exchange programs. Both he and Joanne look forward to meeting the over 180 participants expected this coming weekend in Montreal for the Annual General Meeting.

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