

Headline	RM54bil sought to fight AIDS		
MediaTitle	Sunday Star		
Date	18 Sep 2016	Color	Black/white
Section	World	Circulation	339,002
Page No	25,28	Readership	818,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	181 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 4,327
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 12,981



Worthy campaign

Montreal leads a drive to top up cash in Global Fund in move to boost AIDS, malaria and TB fight. >28

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International donors kick off drive to raise cash in Montreal

MONTREAL: International donors kicked off a drive to raise US\$13bil (RM54bil) for fighting AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau vowed the killer diseases can be "eradicated" by 2030.

Trudeau is hosting the fifth triennial Global Fund replenishment conference to fight against these diseases, with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and a half dozen heads of states also in attendance.

"It's a pivotal moment for our global community and a challenge of this magnitude requires a united, sustained commitment from all of us," Trudeau told reporters.

Created as a public-private initiative, the Global Fund has so far spent US\$30bil (RM124bil) on programmes to fight the three deadly diseases around the world, with most of it going to Africa.

It has been credited with helping to save 22 million lives and prevent-

ing 300 million infections over the past decade as it pursues a UN target of eradicating AIDS by 2030 and the other diseases even sooner.

But it needs to raise another US\$13bil to fund its operations over the next three years through 2019. "These epidemics can be eradicated," Trudeau said. "By working together we can put an end to these devastating illnesses forever."

"This is a defining moment for us. Our generation of leaders will be

judged by our action or our inaction on this issue," he added.

Joining political leaders will be Microsoft founder Bill Gates, whose foundation has contributed a total of US\$1.6bil (RM6.6bil) to the Fund since its inception, as well as U2 frontman Bono.

Bono is also co-founder of the non-profit ONE that works to reduce poverty and disease in Africa, and will be a guest speaker at the forum. — AFP