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Dr Rick Lines (left), executive director of Harm Reduction International exchanging Memorandum of Understanding with Datuk Dr Raj Karim.

KL to host harm reduction conference

HARM Reduction International and the Malaysian Aids Council announced that the 24th International Harm Reduction Conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur from Oct 18 to 21. The announcement was made at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations recently.

Established in 1990, the biennial conference is the global focal point for knowledge sharing, networking and promoting evidence-based best practice in the field of harm reduction.

It attracts 1,000 delegates from over 70 countries, including front line service providers, scientists and researchers, policy makers and politicians, doctors and health professionals, people from international and UN organisations as well as drug users and people working in criminal justice.

This will be the first time the event will be staged in a Muslim majority country in Southeast Asia,

and it will highlight issues and challenges in the drug response sector that are specific to the region.

“Leadership will be a key theme of the conference, appropriately so in recognition of the Malaysian Government’s leadership on harm reduction programming which has contributed to the more than 50 per cent drop in new HIV infections in people who inject drugs since its implementation in 2006,” said Dr Rick Lines, executive director of Harm Reduction International.

“It is also to emphasise that we will not meet the global challenges presented by issues such as HIV and overdose without brave and committed leadership on every level, from the community to the United Nations.”

Datuk Dr Raj Karim, president of the Malaysian Aids Council added: “The conference is both an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to evidence-based harm reduction programming, and a reminder of the pressing need to accelerate our efforts towards the Millennium Development Goals expiring in 2015.”