



Press release

WHO/UNAIDS WELCOMES G-8 ENDORSEMENT OF THE GLOBAL HIV VACCINE ENTERPRISE

Geneva, 11 June 2004--The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) today welcomed the G-8's endorsement of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise, a virtual consortium proposed by an international group of scientists that is being established to accelerate HIV vaccine development.

HIV/AIDS vaccine development has been slow, due mainly to the enormous scientific, logistical and financial challenges involved. Since the discovery of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) as the cause of AIDS in 1983/84, multiple vaccine candidates have been tested in more than 70 human clinical trials with moderate success. So far, only one vaccine candidate has concluded the stage of definitive trials and it did not show any noticeable level of efficacy. This indicates a need to consolidate and intensify all international efforts to ensure further progress in this field.

"I welcome the G-8's endorsement of this initiative. The Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise will bring a new political and financial dimension addressing the complex challenge of developing a safe and effective HIV/AIDS vaccine," said Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General of WHO.

The Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise would enhance coordination, information sharing and global collaboration amongst the world's HIV vaccine researchers in industrialized and developing countries in both private and public sectors. It would prioritize the scientific challenges that need to be addressed, coordinate product development efforts and encourage greater use of information sharing technologies. Existing resources would be better aligned and would be channeled more efficiently. Its work would also promote more effective synergies between research into new technologies and global efforts to scale up the preventive and therapeutic interventions for HIV/AIDS which already exist.

"AIDS has always challenged us to do business differently, and this is no less true with development of a vaccine," said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "The G8's endorsement of the Global HIV Vaccine Enterprise is a vital boost to help it forge the strategic planning, collaboration, and global investment of resources by governments and industry that is commensurate with the intensive effort required to develop a globally accessible and affordable HIV vaccine".

To achieve these goals, the Enterprise will develop a strategic plan for development, testing and production of HIV candidate vaccines in collaboration with major national and international partners, as well as vaccine manufacturers. Partners in the

Enterprise include the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Vaccine Research Centre at the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), the European Research Institutes, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), European Union and national HIV vaccine programmes and research institutions from developing countries.

WHO and UNAIDS are committed to supporting the Enterprise, by contributing to capacity building in developing countries in conducting clinical trials at the highest scientific and ethical levels, addressing issues such as future access to HIV vaccines as part of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care programmes.

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