



## STATEMENT

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### WHO AND EUROPEAN COMMISSION AGREE COMMON POINTS IN HEALTH RESEARCH AGENDA

At a meeting today at World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters in Geneva, WHO Director General Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland and the Member of the European Commission (EC) responsible for Research, Mr. Philippe Busquin, planned new efforts to encourage exchanges of information and a high level of synergy in addressing, through research, broadly converging objectives for improving the health of populations. The following is a joint statement.

The emergence of major communicable diseases such as HIV and the resurgence of malaria and tuberculosis, especially in the least developed regions, raises the demand for research at a time of rapid advances in molecular medicine and biotechnology. New strategies must mobilise key actors - those developing relevant technologies and those streamlining and making use of them. Dr Brundtland and Mr Busquin both underline the need to step up research in order to improve health at the global level.

In order to put health research results at the service of all those in need, the WHO and the European Commission's Research Directorate General will aim at fostering new partnerships including networks of excellence, public health services, industry, high-tech entrepreneurial businesses, NGOs and governments.

- Without prejudice to the ongoing co-operation on health related research between WHO and the European Commission, this meeting is an opportunity to review the significant contribution made by both partners in the recent discussions on the role of research in relation to poverty related diseases.
- WHO and the European Community bear specific responsibilities, among them fostering research and development efforts, to deliver solutions to health improvement better and faster.

- The creation of a European Research Area (ERA) will set new ground for greater co-ordination of the considerable science and technology resources from the European Union (EU), speeding up delivery, and turning work on the bench into practical applications. This will require integrated approaches aiming at closer working together of those developing with those using knowledge
- Both the EC and WHO see the role of the development of scientific partnerships with researchers and research institutions from developing countries, and the strengthening of research capacities in these countries, as crucial to improved health.
- The EC and WHO are hugely concerned by three poverty-associated diseases: malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The EC acknowledges the critical importance of international public goods becoming accessible to all those in need, and is fully engaged into up-scaling of the research efforts in order to deliver these goods faster.
- Both the EC and WHO are concerned that health inequalities among and within countries remain entrenched. Thus, more attention should be given to research to guide and monitor health system development and to have an impact on the policy-making process.
- WHO and the EC have been developing collaboration in their respective research initiatives. The emergence of a new focus of research and development activities calls, however, for more interactions in research policy and programming down to the dissemination of research results, thus identifying best opportunities under the respective obligations that the two organisations have.
- Both partners could considerably reinforce each other's action and develop synergies towards common objectives. This strengthened co-operation would be carried out in the context of a new Exchange of Letters between WHO and the European Commission to be concluded shortly.

WHO and the Commission will undertake efforts to raise the global level of resources for health research and development.