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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION WELCOMES CANADA'S LANDMARK CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL 3 BY 5 AIDS TREATMENT INITIATIVE

Geneva - Today the World Health Organization (WHO) extended its gratitude to the Canadian government for the Prime Minister's announcement of a contribution of CAD\$ 100 million over two years for the WHO target of treating three million people living with AIDS by the end of 2005.

"Canada has demonstrated vision and leadership in supporting a new initiative. This contribution to '3 by 5' will make it possible for WHO to help catalyse efforts at the country level to urgently treat three million people living with AIDS," said Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General of WHO. "Yet again, Canada has been an extremely strong supporter of WHO and is visionary in its approach to enable people around the world to access affordable medicines. Three years ago they did the same for the Stop TB partnership in supporting a new global drug facility," said Dr Lee.

There are 34 - 46 million people infected with HIV around the world. In the developing world, six million people need access to antiretroviral therapy to survive. Every year three million die because they do not get treatment, and today only 400 000 people in the developing world have access to treatment. WHO's goal is universal access to AIDS treatment. AIDS treatment is part of a comprehensive AIDS strategy, linking prevention, treatment, care and support.

Tomorrow 11 May, Dr Lee is launching "The World Health Report 2004 - Changing History", an HIV/AIDS report, in Geneva at 1230 GMT with Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Dr Richard Feachem, Executive Director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Journalists can see the embargoed report and materials at www.who.int/whr/2004/download/en/ Login: whr2004 and password: report04.

For more information about the 3 by 5 initiative, see www.who.int/3by5 . Journalists can also call Samantha Bolton, Communications, WHO/HIV department, +41 79 239 23667 or Christine McNab, Communications, WHO Director-General's office, +41 79 254 6815.

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