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Note for the media WHO/13
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PANDEMIC INFLUENZA VACCINE: WHO AND INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MAKE PROGRESS TOWARDS ENSURING ACCESS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Geneva — The World Health Organization (WHO) is today reporting progress towards ensuring access to pandemic influenza vaccines for developing countries in the event of a pandemic and other vaccine-related aspects of influenza pandemic preparedness.

"Most countries with resource constraints do not have the means to access influenza vaccines. If we are to be well-prepared for an influenza pandemic, it is essential that developing countries have access to vaccines. WHO is working to make this happen," said Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, Director, WHO Initiative for Vaccine Research.

This update has been prepared to facilitate discussions in Jakarta next week at a WHO technical meeting about options for ensuring access for developing countries to pandemic vaccine, including on sharing influenza viruses.

It also follows the launch of the *Global pandemic influenza action plan to increase vaccine supply* in October 2006.* To close the several billion dose pandemic influenza vaccine gap the *Global Action Plan* laid out three approaches.

One of these is **increasing vaccine production capacity**, including through building new production facilities in developing and/or industrialized countries. Up to six projects to establish in-country manufacturing capacity of influenza vaccine are in the final stage of approval following an application process which began in November. These projects will take place in two Latin American and four Asian countries, three of which have had human H5N1 influenza cases.

This effort is supported with US\$18 million from the Government of Japan and the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Associations has expressed willingness to collaborate with WHO towards helping developing countries gain access to pandemic influenza vaccines through technology transfer and other appropriate strategies. Attesting to the feasibility of

* <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr58/en/index.html>

this approach, Sanofi Pasteur has played a key role in transferring influenza vaccine technology to Brazil which will be in a position to produce vaccine next year.

In addition, the World Health Organization and UNICEF are investigating financing avenues so that developing countries can access products manufactured by multinational vaccine producers. Currently under consideration, among others, are the establishment of a virtual international pandemic influenza stockpile and advance purchase mechanisms to secure funds to buy vaccines for developing countries in case of an influenza pandemic. A proposal containing several financing and technical options will be presented to the board of the GAVI Alliance.

The *Global Action Plan* also urged **increasing seasonal influenza vaccine use**. WHO has carried out a global survey of current and anticipated seasonal influenza vaccine demand and supply. The results will be available within a few weeks.

Encouraging progress has also been made in the third key area identified in the *Global Action Plan*: **research and development**. As reported last month, more than 40 clinical trials of pandemic influenza vaccines in humans have been completed or are ongoing, with all vaccines reported safe and well tolerated in all age groups tested.[†]

Following the 15-16 February 2007 meeting of experts on the evaluation of pandemic influenza prototype vaccines in clinical trials, WHO will: 1. continue to facilitate access of developing countries to influenza vaccines through technology transfer and other strategies; 2. encourage collaboration between developers and producers of human and veterinary influenza vaccines; and 3. continue to review the latest clinical trial data.

Finally, in mid-2007, an independent steering committee with representation of both developing and industrialized countries will be established to oversee the implementation of the *Global Action Plan*. The Government of Canada will provide support for the committee and its work.

"We are pleased with progress in the pandemic influenza vaccine area since our *Global Action Plan* was published. For this work to continue to advance in a timely manner, additional funds are needed for this 10-year, US \$10 billion effort to protect the world from what could be a devastating public health crisis. We urge other countries and donors to step up and join Canada, Japan and the United States in supporting this critical work," declared Dr Kieny.

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To make a financial contribution towards vaccine-related pandemic influenza preparedness, please contact: Guido Torelli, WHO Initiative for Vaccine Research, Geneva; Tel. +41 22 791 2075; E-mail: torellig@who.int.

The *Global pandemic influenza action plan to increase vaccine supply* is available at: <http://www.who.int/vaccines-documents/DocsPDF06/863.pdf>.

All WHO Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Features can be obtained on the WHO web site: <http://www.who.int>.

[†] <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2007/np07/en/index.html>