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## **TROPICAL DISEASE EXPERTS CALL ON G-8 LEADERS TO ADDRESS NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES AT 2008 G-8 SUMMIT IN JAPAN**

### **Call for a Global Financing Mechanism to Combat These Devastating Diseases Reiterated**

**WASHINGTON, DC – March 24, 2008** – Noting that the world is now “in a unique position to control or eliminate some of the highest burden neglected tropical diseases (NTDs),” an international team of tropical disease control experts has urged that the G-8 leaders make combating NTDs a topic at the annual G-8 Summit this coming July in Japan. The experts also reiterated their call for the establishment of a global financing mechanism to address the need for a more sustained global financial commitment to effectively fight these debilitating and sometimes deadly diseases.

The NTDs, such as intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, elephantiasis, river blindness, and trachoma, represent the most common infections of the world's poorest people —the “bottom billion.” They are a major reason, say the authors, why the world's poorest citizens cannot escape a vicious, downward spiral of destitution. Fortunately, many NTDs can be effectively treated. In 2005, the leaders of the major public-private partnerships devoted to fighting NTDs, together with a new NTD Department at the World Health Organization, designed a package of drugs known as the “rapid impact package” that treats the seven most common NTDs for a modest 50 cents per person per year.

The experts note that the mass administration of such drugs has been the cornerstone of global projects aimed at tackling several of the NTDs, and the launch of a dedicated financing mechanism to increase these activities would be “one of the very most cost-effective and urgently needed approaches for sustainable poverty reduction.”

In restating their call for a global NTD funding mechanism, the experts declared that the “enormous adverse health and economic burdens of the NTDs, and the excellent results of NTD control initiatives over recent years, call for the establishment of more sustained global financing mechanisms such as those currently available for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.”

One solution the experts proposed is a special “NTD Fund” for the implementation of interventions to specifically address NTDs. This new fund would have a financing mechanism similar to that of the existing Global Fund. Countries burdened by NTDs would apply to the new fund for financing for NTD control efforts, and an expert board (supported by the expertise of the World Health Organization) would vet the applications.

The G8 summit, they say, presents an opportunity for G8 leaders to consider earmarking specific funds for NTD control. "Such an approach would result in cures or morbidity reductions for those people currently infected, and it would impact transmission, or in some settings result in disease elimination. We believe the establishment of a global NTD financing mechanism represents one of the very most cost-effective and urgently needed approaches for sustainable poverty reduction.”

The proposal to establish a "Global Fund to Fight Neglected Tropical Diseases" is authored by Dr. Peter Hotez (Sabin Vaccine Institute, George Washington University), Professor David Molyneux (Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, UK), Professor Alan Fenwick (Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, Imperial College London, UK), Dr. Lorenzo Savioli (Director, Department of Neglected Tropical Diseases, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland), and Professor Tsutomu Takeuchi (Department of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan).

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