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## **New Tuberculosis Drugs Required to Eliminate Epidemic, Meet Economic Development Goals**

### **Health Experts Urge Public & Industry Commitments**

**New York, March 24, 2003** – In remarks timed for World TB Day this year, leading health experts underscored the critical need for a new, faster-acting tuberculosis medicine, the aim of the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development (TB Alliance). The TB Alliance is an international public-private partnership and not-for-profit accelerating the discovery and development of new medicines.

Representing global health, philanthropy and drug development organizations, speakers emphasized how today's 30-year-old drugs are inadequate in controlling an epidemic that takes a life every fifteen seconds. Infecting one-third of the world, tuberculosis is an airborne infectious disease and the leading killer of AIDS patients and women of child-bearing age. Today's treatment regimen takes 6 to 9 months to complete and less than a third of TB patients have access to proper treatment.

A new TB drug would ensure that the G-8 could meet its Millennium Development goals to eliminate TB by 2050. Speakers urged governments and industry to scale up funding and cooperation to make the goal of a faster TB cure a reality.

#### **The Need for a New Drug**

In prepared remarks to be delivered in London on March 24, Dr. J. W. Lee, the nominee Director-General at the World Health Organization, said:

"If we are to achieve our target of eliminating TB by the year 2050, it is absolutely necessary that we develop better tools: new diagnostics, new drugs and a new vaccine. The tools are all at least 30 years old and . . . are not adequate for the mountainous task before us. The Stop TB Partnership is coordinating research in all of these areas, but efforts to date have been hampered by inadequate funding resources. As G-8 leaders prepare to meet in France in June, they should unite in scaling up the fight against [tuberculosis, AIDS and malaria]."

Dr. Maria Freire, CEO of the TB Alliance said: "We do not have an option. New TB drugs are 'must-haves' to combat TB's rapid spread, drug-resistance and co-infection with HIV/AIDS. As the lead agency of the Working Group on New Drugs in the Stop TB Partnership, we are hard at work to develop better medicines that will dramatically reduce treatment time.

"We endorse and echo Dr. Lee's call," Dr. Freire said. "A faster cure for TB will save lives, secure public health and improve prosperity in all nations. We have already made significant progress in uniting public and private expertise; our collective success in developing a new drug requires additional commitments from governments and industry."

Dr. Helene Gayle, Director of HIV, TB and Reproductive Health at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said: "We have to look at new tools and technologies to fight tuberculosis. New drug development is critically important. The regimen for treating tuberculosis is still

complicated and long, and there haven't been new TB drugs developed recently." Dr. Gayle spoke in a press event hosted by RESULTS.

Dr. Charles Yu, a TB specialist who leads a public-private coalition for better TB control in the Philippines (PHILCAT) said: "Today TB takes too long to treat and many people don't finish their medicines. In the Philippines, 75 Filipinos die every day. The economic losses are almost 10% of our gross domestic product. These people have died needlessly because there is no effective drug that has come out over the past 30 years. They should be cured and can be cured if there were just effective drugs that we could give them."

### **What Industry and Government Can Do**

"We are calling on leaders in government and in industry to join us fully in this endeavor so that we can make the goal of a faster cure a reality. Solving this public health issue will require a new kind of global public-private partnership," said Ms. Joelle Tanguy, Director of Public Affairs & Advocacy at the TB Alliance.

Dr. Bernard Pecoul, Executive Director of the Access to Essential Medicines Campaign at Medecins Sans Frontieres/Doctors Without Borders, said: "Today, governments can contribute additional financial resources to the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development. In 2003 my message is to convince the G-8 to put money on the table in order to have new drugs to treat tuberculosis patients."

Dr. Doris Rouse, Portfolio Manager at the TB Alliance and Head of Global Health at RTI International said: "Since drug development is an expensive and long process, support is essential. Industry expertise, plus financial support from governments and philanthropic organizations, will make all the difference. It will certainly require an investment – one that pays off many times over, in terms of human and financial capital."

"I'm asking companies to use their knowledge, to use their expertise, and also to use human resources," said Dr. Pecoul. "Industry can do two things here: they can offer access to existing compounds and open up their libraries of compounds."

"Companies can test those compounds for activity against tuberculosis, through a no-cost program at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)," said Dr. Rouse. "The NIH program is done on a confidential basis. Proprietary rights are protected, and they will screen compounds for activity against tuberculosis."

Ms. Tanguy said: "The Alliance is developing a new bottom line, the shared objective of an affordable and accessible drug, by bringing together public and private expertise. We're designing win/win agreements and transforming the incentive structure."

For full remarks of speakers, please visit the TB Alliance web site, [www.tballiance.org](http://www.tballiance.org). As part of its World TB Day activities, the TB Alliance is releasing a new flash movie about the spread of the epidemic and the need for new drugs on its web site, [www.tballiance.org](http://www.tballiance.org).

### **About the TB Alliance**

The Global Alliance for TB Drug Development (TB Alliance) is a not-for-profit, public-private partnership seeking to accelerate the discovery and/or development of affordable new anti-TB drugs that will shorten treatment, be effective against multi-drug resistant strains, and improve treatment of latent infection. The TB Alliance functions as a lean, virtual R&D organization that outsources R&D

projects to public labs or industry. It builds a portfolio of promising drug candidates, manages their development through cooperative deals with public and private partners, providing staged funding and expert scientific and management guidance. For more information about the TB Alliance, visit its web site at <http://www.tballiance.org>.

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