

Press Release

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G8 Development Summit

R&D Pharmaceutical Industry committed to improving health in Africa

Berlin (VFA). "The research-based pharmaceutical companies have long played a key role in international aid partnerships to improve health in Africa. Not only do they supply the latest medicines for diseases like HIV/AIDS at cost and help African companies to manufacture them locally, they also donate others for tropical diseases in huge quantities. Furthermore, they also run numerous training programs for medical staff and public education campaigns. Their actions touch and improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people," Dr. Harvey Bale, Director General of the global pharmaceutical association IFPMA, said in Berlin today. "Research-based pharmaceutical companies are increasingly active in the development of new medicines and vaccines for tuberculosis, malaria, worm infestations and other tropical poverty-related diseases," reported Dr. Dr. Andreas Barner, Chairman of the German Association of Research-based Pharmaceutical Companies (VFA). "Equally, research into HIV/AIDS remains a high priority for the pharmaceutical industry."

The upcoming G8 summit brings a welcome focus on improving health in Africa. The biggest obstacle to this is lack of health care infrastructure and trained personnel in Africa. The research-based pharmaceutical industry therefore hopes that the G8 nations will make available more funding to help African countries to strengthen their healthcare infrastructure. They should also look at strengthening measures to help those countries to retain trained healthcare staff. For example, whereas the WHO recommends a minimum standard of 20 doctors per 100,000 inhabitants, Malawi has just two, according to *Médecins Sans Frontières*. The G8 should also encourage African governments to play their part too; for example, so far, only one African country has met the African

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Union's Maputo Declaration target of allocating 15% of government expenditure to healthcare. A challenge of this magnitude can only be effectively addressed by a very broad and committed partnership, bringing together governments in developed and developing countries, intergovernmental agencies, NGOs and the private sector.

To make high quality, new HIV/AIDS medicines available on a sustainable basis to infected individuals in African and other developing countries, the original manufacturers established the *Accelerating Access Initiative (AAI)* in 2000. In this initiative, anti-retroviral medicines (ARVs) are supplied to these countries on a "no profit, no loss" basis. Now reaching more than 800,000 patients worldwide and more than 460,000 in Africa, the AAI supplies more than 40 percent of all people receiving ARV therapy in developing countries worldwide.

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"However, the pharmaceutical companies are not just active in the field of HIV/AIDS", Dr. Bale said, "they are active in partnerships addressing a wide range of health challenges, including tuberculosis and malaria, tropical diseases such as Chagas disease, leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis, river blindness, trachoma, schistosomiasis and sleeping sickness." The industry's commitment is long term: 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the Mectizan Donation Program, where the sponsoring company has committed to donate this medicine for as long as it takes to eradicate river blindness."

According to an IFPMA study, validated by the London School of Economics, between 2000 and 2005, its member companies made available 539 million healthcare interventions, sufficient to reach two out of three people in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on a conservative valuation using wholesale prices, these contributions were worth USD 4.4 billion.

"Nevertheless, our specific core expertise lies in the development of new pharmaceuticals and making them available to patients," Barner said. "In this respect, AIDS has the highest priority. There is no other disease for which we have developed more drugs since 1985: more than 20 ARVs, and about 60 drugs against AIDS-related infections. In the pipeline, there are a further 34 ARVs and 40 drugs against AIDS-related infections. The companies are working on an extension of available treatments for children and on 19 candidate vaccines. In the history of diseases, rarely has such a large and im-

pressively successful armory of medicines been made available in such a short period of time. Rarely has the industry had such a life-prolonging impact on so many patients.”

“On the other hand, research-based pharmaceutical companies are also working on 17 new drugs for tuberculosis, 18 against malaria and some vaccines for these diseases. More than 40 pharmaceutical research projects are also directed at worm infestations and other tropical poverty-related diseases,” Barner continued. “In many cases, the companies collaborate as part of public-private partnerships with other organizations and institutions, sharing the costs and usage rights for the developed pharmaceuticals.”

Barner also mentioned that several governments had for the first time supported the development of a new Africa-specific vaccine against pneumonia and meningitis based on an advance market commitment earlier this year: “An interesting funding approach, because public funds only have to be paid if the project is successful.”

Furthermore, Barner said that there are considerable misunderstandings regarding the role of patents in the health situation in the Developing World. “The fact is that patents safeguard intellectual property; without them, inventors could lose interest in continued research efforts and lose the fruits of their labor to any competitor. Without the research of pharmaceutical companies in the past 20 years, in all likelihood, no drugs to fight HIV would have become available. This would have been disastrous. Similarly, current and future health care problems will only be solved if companies can afford to do research, i.e. when its results lead to patent-protected drugs. Patents are not the obstacle to access to medicines for infectious diseases in Africa, as companies recognize that the prices they charge for the resulting medicines need to be adapted according to the market concerned – hence, the no profit prices they charge for ARVs in Africa.”

Most of the pharmaceuticals needed in developing countries have long been patent-free anyway. However, the absence of patents for these medicines has not resulted in them reaching the majority of patients. It is erroneous to assume that health problems can only be solved simply by breaking patents.

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More meaningful than such measures would be the involvement of the expertise of the research-based pharmaceutical companies in additional health programs and also to invest in a solid health care infrastructure. "Because what good are pharmaceuticals, if there are neither physicians nor a pharmacy system locally?" Barner concluded.

The digital press kit with the statements, presentations and new brochures describing the research-based pharmaceutical industry's ongoing activities for the developing world is available online at <http://www.vfa.de/pk20070531>.

*The **International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations (IFPMA)** is the global non-profit NGO representing the research-based pharmaceutical, biotech and vaccine sectors. Its members comprise 25 leading international companies and 46 national and regional industry associations covering developed and developing countries. The IFPMA Clinical Trials Portal (www.ifpma.org/clinicaltrials) and IFPMA activities in Health Partnerships (www.ifpma.org) help make the industry's activities more transparent. The IFPMA strengthens patient safety by improving risk assessment of medicines and combating their counterfeiting. It also provides the secretariat for the International Conference on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH).*

*The **German Association of Research-based Pharmaceutical Companies (VFA)** is the trade association of the research-based pharmaceutical companies in Germany. It represents the interests of 43 globally leading research-based pharmaceutical companies and more than 100 subsidiaries and affiliated companies in the areas of health, research and economic policy. The VFA member companies make up about two-thirds of the German pharmaceutical market and employ about 95,000 people in Germany, including 16,500 in research and development. The VFA's press conferences – now available on the Internet. For more information, please visit: <http://www.vfa.de/onlinepk>*

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