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Bonn Call for Action on Promoting Sustainable Global Health

11 May 2007

Preamble

We, the participants at the international conference "Towards Sustainable Global Health" held in Bonn, Germany from 9 – 11 May 2007, including a unique multisectoral, multidisciplinary group of

- Government, academia, and practitioners
- International organization, NGOs, and civil society
- Ambassadors, mayors, and slum dwellers

Considering that human health is at the center of human aspirations and a basic human right,

Recognizing that human health cuts across all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and is a prerequisite for achieving human well being and development,

Acknowledging the achievements of health workers, plumbers, scientists, visionary political leaders and other stakeholders in proving the overwhelming societal value of hygiene and public health,

Emphasizing the importance of promoting and achieving access for all to high-quality and affordable health care,

Call for action by national governments, the international community and all relevant stakeholders to take recommended measures to promote sustainable global health, outlined below.

Messages of the conference for Policymakers, Business and Social Partners

Good health is good wealth

Health is the bedrock of economic prosperity, and fosters better investment opportunities and improved productivity of human resources.

Good health is good governance

Health fosters good governance. A healthy work force, safe homes and working conditions, social health protection, and access to water and sanitation are not only noble objectives. Good health fosters stable cities, rural areas, and societies.

Good health is good for security and peace building

Health is a basic human right. It is the basis of human aspirations of all social groups irrespective of their religious affiliation or cultural background. Providing sufficient health services to all is not only the expression of social solidarity, it is the foundation of social stability, the basis of sustainable development and an indispensable pillar of human security world wide.



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Central questions for sustainable global health

The world faces a variety of existential challenges today and in the near future, which pose a threat to human health and security with consequences for political and social stability. These challenges are accentuated by

- Climate change, accompanied by increasing frequency and intensity of natural hazards, and changing climatic conditions affecting disease vectors
- Environmental degradation such as air and water pollution, and lack of food security
- Patterns of inequality, including gender discrimination, poverty, and educational gaps in urban and rural areas

These factors bear grave consequences for the physical and mental health of all adult women and men, children and youth, and the elderly. These challenges can derail progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and hold back human development.

Prompted by this concern, several Bonn-based UN entities

- UNESCO International Center for Education (UNESCO-UNEVOC),
- United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and
- IHDP) together with
- International Labor Organization (ILO); and the
- Institute for Hygiene and Public Health of the University of Bonn (a WHO collaborating center)

organized the International Conference '**Towards Sustainable Global Health.**'

Conference participants addressed the following questions:

- What are the advantages of an integrated and holistic global health strategy to reach the MDGs?
- What are the risks, challenges, and needs for global health in the future?
- What significance will holistic hygiene concepts and disease prevention have on public health strategies, particularly for newly born, infants and children?
- How can we achieve sustainable global health in the face of environmental change, including threats to human security and the dangers of accelerating urbanization and the impact on rural livelihoods?
- How can we move towards a multi-level strategy integrating education and training, individual capacity and knowledge, home and workplace, science, government and private organisations?
- What is the role of corporate social responsibility and public private partnership in improving global health?

Top seven threats to sustainable global health

To answer these questions, experts at the conference identified the top seven threats to sustainable global health.

- **Poverty and inequality** between social groups, gender and disparities between rural and urban areas
- **Rising vulnerability** to natural hazards, to communicable and chronic diseases
- **Water and sanitation** such as inadequate water supply and infrastructure to support safe water and sanitation
- **Uncontrolled urbanization** such as the increase of slums in mega- and meta-cities and their impact on rural areas
- **Marginalization of rural population**
- **Unsafe workplace and home conditions** such as exposure to poor hygiene and dangers at the workplace, home, and health care facilities
- **Finance and Investment** such as insufficient investment in health and supporting infrastructure for primary health care and social health protection, and lack of transparency and accountability to ensure resource investment reaches intended populations



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Recommended entry points

A comprehensive framework for joint actions by all stakeholders should include and integrate the basic principles of public health and hygiene, with implications for:

Poverty and inequality

- Educate basic hygienic measures to prevent diseases, particularly among women and girls (home hygiene)
- Increase access for all, especially poor and marginalized, to high quality, affordable primary health care services
- Improve access of the poor and marginalized to affordable pharmaceuticals and medical services through better social health protection

Rising vulnerability

- Enhance outreach and cover of vaccination programs
- Provide acute prevention measures such as vector control
- Foster information exchange such as geographic and other earth-observation systems, including effective surveillance systems for disease control
- Enhance mitigation measures and adaptive capacity to climate change, particularly for global environmental change including air pollution and natural hazards

Water and sanitation systems

- Provide safe water in a socially feasible setting
- Secure investment and provide appropriate sanitation systems

Urban and rural health governance

- Improve governance of healthcare systems, particularly for marginal groups
- Access to healthcare systems (primary health care, hospitals)
- Foster health delivery systems (social health protection and health insurance)
- Provide preconditions for establishing public health systems, including community-focused health councils
- Train health workers for primary / community health
- Establish programs for individual health promotion (hygiene, family services, nutrition, sexual behavior)
- Holistic epidemiological characterization and monitoring of public health in urban and rural areas

Societal and sectoral health awareness

- Strengthen public organizations to ensure hygiene, safe water supply, adequate nutrition and health for the public
- Establish mechanisms for enhancing health competence through all channels, such as schools, workplace, and communities
- Facilitate action among sectors to achieve safe and decent workplaces
- Promote awareness and individual capacities for health maintenance, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being

Investment and finance

- Invest in transparent, accountable, and effective infrastructure for primary / public health, including plumbing and proper water treatment
- Design investment and insurance schemes for improved provision of health services, including clinics and other healthcare infrastructure
- Design and implement affordable health insurance programs to improve access of all people to health insurance and to protect individuals from financial ruin when individual health fails
- Support of public private partnership projects

Strengthen knowledge base and awareness

- Cost effective and comprehensive health education through formal and informal means
- Strengthen applied research in hygiene, public health, and public health policy
- Strengthen e-media and information technologies to strengthen public health

Health is everyone's responsibility!