Global Partners Making Progress Against Neglected Tropical Diseases, New Report and Scorecard Show

From Promises to Progress, released on first anniversary of historic London Declaration on NTDs, outlines major successes, existing gaps and a path toward reaching ambitious 2020 goals

NEW YORK, Jan. 16, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Global partners in the fight against neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) have made substantial progress over the past year, with more than 40 countries delivering detailed plans to control and eliminate these diseases and major pharmaceutical companies donating more than one billion treatments to meet 100 percent of drug requests by endemic countries. These successes are outlined in a new report, From Promises to Progress, released today in advance of the first anniversary of the landmark London Declaration, which brought public and private partners together under the shared goal of controlling and eliminating 10 NTDs by 2020.

"The prospects for success have never been so strong," said Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). "Many millions of people are being freed from the misery and disability that have kept populations mired in poverty for centuries. Nevertheless, recent progress has revealed unprecedented needs: more nuanced control strategies and new technical tools."

Collaborative efforts among public and private sector organizations have produced major successes in their work to combat NTDs, a group of diseases that disproportionately affect those living in poverty and sicken, disable and disfigure more than one billion people in 149 countries and territories. Notable achievements in 2012 include:

- The world’s leading pharmaceutical companies provided 1.12 billion treatments for NTDs, an increase of 150 million treatments from 2011. These commitments fully met the increased requests from endemic country partners and removed a key bottleneck to the successful treatment and prevention of NTDs. Twenty-nine countries began receiving albendazole or mebendazole to treat or prevent soil-transmitted helminthiasis, increasing treatments provided with those drugs from 46 million in 2011 to 238 million in 2012.
- The United Kingdom increased its spending on NTDs from US$24.7 million in 2011 to $42.5 million in 2012, while the U.S. Agency for International Development has steadily increased its donations over the past several years, reaching $89 million in 2012. These donors and others committed funds to support integrated programs, scale up and expand existing programs, increase funding available for disease mapping, improve program strategies through research and develop new tools.
- More than 40 countries developed multi-year integrated NTD plans, and Brazil, Burundi, Cameroon and Honduras launched their plans. Oman became the first previously endemic country verified as trachoma-free, with more expected later in 2013. Two NTD diagnostic tests received regulatory approval: the first ever lateral flow test for sleeping sickness was commercially launched in December 2012, and a new rapid diagnostic test for lymphatic filariasis will become commercially available in the first half of 2013.

"These numbers are more than just drugs delivered or funds committed. They ultimately mean that millions of people have been spared pain and suffering from these debilitating diseases," said Christopher A. Viehbacher, CEO of Sanofi. "Through new and innovative partnerships, we can continue to help break the cycle of poverty and overcome the burden of NTDs."

Today, WHO also launched its second NTD report, Sustaining the Drive to Overcome the Global Impact of Neglected Tropical Diseases, which discusses the path to achieving 2020 goals, identifies challenges and
proposes plans to address each disease. Together, these reports offer a united way forward for the NTD community.

To coordinate efforts and monitor progress, partners developed a scorecard to track the London Declaration pledges. Released today with the report, the London Declaration Scorecard captures progress made and where efforts must improve if partners hope to reach the 2020 goals. In addition, the scorecard and report set benchmarks for success in 2013 and beyond that would help put the world on a steady trajectory toward those goals.

"Game-changing success against NTDs can only happen with the collaboration of all sectors: governments, donors, industry and NGOs," said Simon Bush, Director of NTDs at Sightsavers International and former Chair of the NTD NGDO Network. "Seeing the NTD community make this enormous effort to come together to achieve the scale-up in treatments required gives me hope that we'll be able to rid the world of some of its worst diseases."

In addition to marking gains against NTDs, From Promises to Progress identifies several gaps. Preliminary analyses suggest an annual funding gap of approximately $300 million through 2020 for the implementation of NTD programs, which would prevent the scale-up of critical initiatives and endanger hundreds of millions of people. Partners will need to strengthen implementation capacity in NTD-endemic countries, including investments in disease mapping, and ramp up research and development for prioritized new tools to detect, treat and prevent the diseases. To create sustainable change and address the causes of these diseases, the NTD community will also need to collaborate across sectors, including water, sanitation and education.

As a sign of their commitment to addressing these gaps, nearly 500 stakeholders from diverse backgrounds met in November 2012 at the World Bank to discuss how to tackle challenges and replicate best practices across disease areas and countries.

"By supporting the London Declaration last year, a wide group of partners committed to redoubling our efforts to control or eliminate NTDs by the end of this decade. This year, we've seen these words translated into action," said Trevor Mundel, President of Global Health at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "By working together, we are on our way to protecting millions from disability, disfigurement and death."

From Promises to Progress is the first release of what will become an annual report on global commitments to controlling and eliminating NTDs. For the full text of the report and scorecard, and for more information about the fight against NTDs, visit www.unitingtocombatntds.org.

Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases
Uniting to Combat NTDs is a group of organizations committed to achieving WHO's 2020 goal to control and eliminate 10 NTDs. By working together, Uniting to Combat NTDs aims to chart a new course toward health and sustainability among the world's poorest communities. Affiliated organizations have signed the London Declaration on NTDs, which was launched on January 30, 2012.

CONTACT: Dan Pawson, +1-718-873-3169, DPawson@globalhealthstrategies.com