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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE with a.m. papers on 22 June 2001

THREE MALARIA VACCINE DEVELOPMENT DONORS JOIN FORCES

European Malaria Vaccine Initiative, USAID, and the Malaria Vaccine Initiative Announce Plans to Jointly Develop Malaria Vaccines for the Developing World

WASHINGTON, D.C., USA and COPENHAGEN, DK (22 June 2001) - Three programs of global reach have agreed to work together to speed the development of malaria vaccines for the developing world. The three-way alliance is a critical development in international collaboration to combat a disease that kills at least one child every thirty seconds.

"At many times in the last 15 years, malaria vaccine development has been agonizingly slow," said Sir Gustav Nossal, Chair of the Strategic Advisory Council that helps guide the Malaria Vaccine Initiative. "This new network of international collaborations promises to change that."

The Malaria Vaccine Initiative at PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health, a US-based nonprofit organization), the European Commission's European Malaria Vaccine Initiative (EMVI), and the U.S. Agency for International Development's Malaria Vaccine Development Program (MVDP), announced today that they have joined forces in facilitating malaria vaccine development - from testing and manufacturing of vaccine candidates to ensuring their accessibility and affordability in developing countries. Each program pushes forward the development of malaria vaccine candidates through partnerships with governments, universities, and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies. Clinical evaluation of vaccines is ongoing and planned for Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States.

"Malaria is a deadly disease," said Soren Jepsen, M.D., Manager of EMVI. "But because malaria is primarily a problem of developing countries, the commitment to combat it requires political will. These agreements demonstrate that will on both sides of the Atlantic."

"Malaria defines misery in developing countries, and current global resources are not sufficient to defeat it, making concerted action imperative," said Regina Rabinovich, MD, Director of the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) at PATH. "Today's agreements extend our efforts to replace competition with strategic collaboration, as established by our prior agreement with the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases."

"Our three programs share the same sense of mission," said Carter Diggs, M.D., Ph.D., Senior Advisor of USAID's MVDP. "There have been many attempts over the years at increased international collaboration. Today's partnership ensures that promising vaccine candidates won't fall through the cracks."

Approximately two million children, the majority in Africa, die every year from malaria, and between 300 and 500 million people are infected with the disease. Malaria is a parasitic infection transmitted through the bite of the Anopheles mosquito. The availability of an effective malaria vaccine would greatly aid ongoing global efforts to reduce the impact of malaria through drugs and other means.

Each program brings significant resources and experience to the fight against malaria. MVI has a flexible structure that can interact effectively with international partners, as well as considerable expertise. EMVI has the support of the European Union, broad access to European science, and a core partnership with The African Malaria Vaccine Testing Network (AMVTN). USAID has a 35-year history of supporting malaria vaccine development through a global network of partners.

"We're hoping that today's agreement among three major players in the malaria vaccine field will spur even greater collaboration worldwide," said Rabinovich.

The three groups will strategize about how to break through technical and financial barriers to vaccine development. They will also share information useful for the design of clinical trials and malaria vaccine development where permitted by confidentiality agreements.

"The malaria vaccine field stands on the brink of exciting new developments," said Jepsen. "This partnership will speed us toward the goal of an accessible malaria vaccine for the developing world, as no single organization can manage the work of carrying through a vaccine from development to testing."

PATH (Program for Appropriate Technology in Health) established the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) through a \$50 million seed grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. MVI at PATH seeks to accelerate the development of promising malaria vaccines and ensure their availability for the developing world. For further information about MVI and PATH, visit the Web sites at www.MalariaVaccine.org and www.path.org.

The European Malaria Vaccine Initiative (EMVI) seeks to accelerate development of malaria vaccines in Europe and developing countries; contribute to the global effort to develop malaria vaccines; and ensure affordability and accessibility of malaria vaccines in developing countries. For more information about the EMVI, visit the Web site at www.emvi.org.

The USAID's Malaria Vaccine Development Program (MVDP) focuses on the development of vaccines that will reduce malaria-associated mortality and morbidity in developing countries, especially in children and pregnant women. The MVDP works closely with academia, the commercial sector, and other governmental agencies. For more information, visit the Web Sites, www.US Aid.gov.