



Neglected tropical diseases

World Health Assembly adopts resolution on all 17 neglected tropical diseases

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Member States call for more focus on the growing threat and spread of dengue

Geneva | 27 May 2013

The World Health Assembly today adopted a resolution on all 17 neglected tropical diseases¹. Representatives from 32 countries and six speakers from nongovernmental organizations took part in deliberations of resolution EB132.R7.

Among other measures, the resolution urges Member States to:

- ensure country ownership of prevention, control, elimination and eradication programmes;
- expand and implement interventions and advocate for predictable, long-term international financing for activities related to control and capacity strengthening;
- integrate control programmes into primary health-care services and existing programmes;
- ensure optimal programme management and implementation;
- achieve and maintain universal access to interventions and reach the targets of the [roadmap](#)

“This resolution reinforces the growing commitment of Member States in defeating neglected tropical diseases,” said Dr Lorenzo Savioli, Director of the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases. *“As outlined in the WHO roadmap on neglected tropical diseases, we will continue to provide support, guidance, tools and resources to accelerate implementation of interventions.”*

WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan spoke eloquently about and pleaded for the demise of neglected tropical diseases. The size of the problem is immense as these diseases have always inflicted immense suffering to more than one billion poor “voiceless and faceless” people, causing stigma and social exclusion particularly for women and children who “suffer in silence.”

Dr Chan acknowledged the continued work entrusted to her as Assistant Director-General for Communicable Diseases by the former WHO Director-General, the late Dr J.W Lee. At the start of her mandate as Director-

[Accelerating work to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases](#)

A roadmap for implementation.
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[World Health Assembly \(WHA\) Resolutions on Neglected Tropical Diseases: 1948–2012](#)

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General in 2007, she asked the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases to give her the commitment to produce results within five years, among other priorities. Dr Chan called for an integrated approach to tackling these diseases as a new way of public–private partnership resulting from the “market failure” of affordable medicines, as those who need these medicines most could least afford them.

“This is one area where we need new thinking about public-private partnerships,” said Dr Chan. *“This is one area where market failure calls for innovation.”*

Increased support from Member States and a pragmatic working relationship with industry have produced unprecedented results. Despite these successes, huge challenges remain. Dr Chan is confident that sharing information on compounds through an initiative of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) will stimulate the development of new medicines.

Representatives of all countries who intervened supported the resolution, highlighting the challenges and ambitious targets set by WHO. Many countries called on WHO to focus more on the growing threat and expansion of dengue and support the scale-up of vector control activities.

China called for more support and better coordination of communications among Member States, while the United Kingdom said it strongly supported the resolution and will continue to play an important role in contributing to defeating these diseases.

Speaking on behalf of the WHO African Region, Cameroon fully supported the resolution, while Madagascar called for increased technical assistance from WHO. Zimbabwe commented on the London Declaration, and Burkina Faso noted the implications of the resolution for greater access to health care and suggested the inclusion of noma in the current list of neglected tropical diseases.

Minor amendments to the resolution were proposed by Brazil, India, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

Six speakers from non-Member States and nongovernmental organizations also addressed the meeting.

¹Buruli ulcer disease (*Mycobacterium ulcerans* infection), Chagas disease (American trypanosomiasis), cysticercosis, dengue, dracunculiasis (guinea-worm disease), echinococcosis, endemic treponematoses, foodborne trematode infections, human African trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness), leishmaniasis, leprosy, lymphatic filariasis (elephantiasis), onchocerciasis (river blindness), rabies, schistosomiasis (bilharziasis), trachoma and soil-transmitted helminthiasis.