

## A new way of working together for multilateral institutions

In New York, 19 July 2007, global health leaders from eight international organizations met informally to discuss ways of strengthening their collaboration to achieve better health outcomes in developing countries. Capitalizing on the recent appointments of several leaders, the objective of the meeting was to review progress made during recent years, assess current trends and future challenges for global health, and agree to collective action, in the context of current opportunities. Several key commitments were recommended, including:

- **Stimulate a global collective sense of urgency for reaching the health-related MDGs.** Participants agreed that, despite important advances in health care for mothers, newborns and children in some countries and for some indicators, the international community – in partnership with national governments – must accelerate and intensify efforts dramatically in order to reach all of the health-related Millennium Development Goals. The eight organizations represented have an important role in stimulating this action. Participants agreed to hold themselves accountable for providing the necessary support to countries to reach the goals and to accelerate action at all levels within each of their own organizations.

**Action:** The global health leaders agreed to catalyse a greater sense of urgency in their own organizations and support it through budgetary and human resources decisions.

- **Modify institutional ways of doing business.** Achieving the health-related MDGs will require increased collaboration

and teamwork. Emphasis was placed on clarifying the core responsibilities of each agency; the need for a coordinated inter-agency approach to providing high-quality, demand-driven technical assistance; and implementation of a collectively supported and robust monitoring and evaluation system. Such approaches need to build on existing structures and programmes at the global, regional and country levels. Each of the organizations agreed to evaluate their personnel, training programmes and incentives structure to reflect this new, collaborative way of doing business, recognizing that new skills will need to be developed, particularly at the country level. The development of a framework for mutual accountability would ensure more clarity on roles, responsibilities and milestones, and a system for monitoring commitments.

**Action:** The global health leaders agreed to work together to better define their individual and collective accountabilities for better and faster results.

- **Foster a more systematic and robust approach to knowledge management and learning.** Given the significant new investments in global health, opportunities are available to capture knowledge and lessons learned in health programmes. The participants emphasized the opportunity to conduct more systematic mapping of the health sector at the country level, including the role played by the private sector.

**Action:** The global health leaders agreed to explore means to systematically capture knowledge gained in health

programmes and to develop a more robust and coordinated approach to knowledge management in general. Finally, the group agreed to pool resources when their organizations conduct mapping exercises and health sector assessments.

- **Recognition of the important opportunity presented by the renewed interest in health systems.** Participants welcomed the commitment to the health-related MDGs as articulated in several new global initiatives being developed around health-system strengthening. Such support is well aligned with the priorities of the participating organizations. There was strong agreement to adopting a ‘systems for outcomes’ approach whereby strengthening would be evaluated by its ability to deliver against health outcomes. In addition, the group recognized the key brokering role of the UN agencies in bridging the need for accountability and countries’ desires to lead their own development processes. The urgent need for benchmarking health system performance was emphasized. Finally, with the growing number of stakeholders working in global health, the need for closer alignment around an overarching health-sector strategy at the country level was emphasized. In this regard, the global health leaders discussed the experience of programming for HIV and AIDS, which may offer learning opportunities.

**Action:** The global health leaders agreed to engage emerging global initiatives in a coordinated manner to ensure their organizations effectively support countries through funding and/or technical and policy assistance. In addition, WHO and

the World Bank committed to fast-track the benchmarking of health system performance.

- **Recognition that the role of civil society and the private sector will be critical for success.** The private sector has several roles to fulfil in delivering health services, in financing health care and in bringing new technologies to market. Innovations can help accelerate progress, whether they are technologically driven or new programme models, such as micro-venture and performance-based financing. Non-governmental organizations have a long history of delivering services in developing countries, and their field experience is a source of important lessons. Support to developing countries in reaching the health-related MDGs will require strengthening integrated delivery systems across the public and private sectors, and creating opportunities for private sector involvement and investment.

**Action:** The global health leaders expressed their commitment to involve the private sector and civil society more systematically as the work on the health-related MDGs expands at global, regional and country levels.

The group has agreed to monitor progress towards achieving the commitments made at this meeting.

*See References, page 108.*