Antibiotic Resistance Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

22 May, 2014 EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00 CEST

Act now, or face catastrophic post-antibiotic era

Global civil society coalition issues grave warning to World Health Assembly, urges leadership and action

GENEVA—The Antibiotic Resistance Coalition, comprising civil society organisations and stakeholders from multiple sectors on six continents, has called on World Health Organization (WHO) Member States to pass a critical resolution (*Combating antimicrobial resistance, including antibiotic resistance*) at the 67th World Health Assembly that would spark concerted global action to control the escalating antimicrobial resistance crisis.

"Antimicrobial resistance—and particularly antibiotic resistance—is the most pressing public health issue facing the global community," said Otto Cars, founder of ReAct (Action on Antibiotic Resistance). "If the resolution is not passed, and the WHO and its Member States do not act quickly, there will be disastrous global health consequences."

Public health researchers estimate that, each year, millions of people around the world are infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and hundreds of thousands of them die. Without immediate action, that toll is expected to worsen.

"We are on the precipice of a post-antibiotic era," said Tim Reed, executive director of Health Action International. "Without a radical shift in the way antibiotics are marketed and used—and unless we overcome the gap in antibiotics discovery—antibiotic resistance will continue to become one of the greatest threats to humankind."

The Antibiotic Resistance Coalition, in its declaration released today, asserts that consumer protection and public health must trump the pursuit of profit, and that effective antibiotics are global public goods. The Coalition also calls for international leadership and action to, in part:

- Prohibit the promotion and advertising of antibiotics;
- Promote new, needs-driven and open research and development models based on the principle of de-linkage (divorcing price from research and development costs and sales volumes);
- Phase out the use of antimicrobials for routine disease prevention in livestock, and end their use, altogether, for growth promotion;
- Build robust systems, in all countries, to monitor and report antibiotic use and resistance trends in humans and animals; and
- Improve public awareness to support an ecological understanding of human-bacteria interaction and behaviour change around antibiotic use.

"Member States must deliver a strong mandate to the WHO to not only develop a pressing action plan on antimicrobial resistance, but also to ensure that public health is prioritised over commercial interests," said Yoke Ling-Chee, program director with Third World Network. "Access to affordable and effective antibiotics is of particular importance for developing countries."

WHO Member States are tentatively scheduled to vote on the resolution on Friday, 23 May. The Antibiotic Resistance Coalition will deliver an intervention to the World Health Assembly prior to the vote.

The Antibiotic Resistance Coalition is also inviting other civil society organisations around the world to sign its declaration, which is available at www.reactgroup.org/arcdeclaration.

- MORE -

Antimicrobial resistance is a general term that refers to resistance to a compound that kills or stops the growth of microorganisms, including bacteria, fungus, parasites and viruses. Antibiotic resistance refers specifically to resistance to anti-bacterial agents.

- END -

The Antibiotic Resistance Coalition consists of numerous civil society organisations and stakeholders from six continents working in the health, agriculture, consumer and development sectors. It advocates for policy change and action to prevent the post-antibiotic era from becoming a bleak reality. Established earlier this year, the Coalition resulted from a series of discussions and meetings organised by the following steering group members: Anthony So (ReAct / Program on Global Health and Technology Access), Niclas Hällström (What Next Forum), Martin Khor (South Centre), Tim Reed (Health Action International), Peter Maybarduk (Public Citizen), Eva Ombaka (ReAct / Health Action International) and David Wallinga (Healthy Food Action). Initial funding for the formation of the Coalition was provided by ReAct and the South Centre.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

- Antibiotic Resistance Coalition's Declaration on Antibiotic Resistance
- World Health Assembly Resolution EB134.R13: Combating Antimicrobial Resistance, Including Antibiotic Resistance
- WHO fact sheet and surveillance report on antimicrobial resistance

MEDIA ENQUIRIES MAY BE DIRECTED TO:

Europe:
Tim Reed (on the ground in Geneva at the World Health Assembly 67)
Health Action International
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
T: +31-6-412-287-41
E: tim@haiglobal.org

Otto Cars
ReAct
Uppsala, Sweden
T: +46-70-892-0203
E: otto.cars@medsci.uu.se

Asia:
Yoke Ling-Chee
Third World Network
Beijing, China
T: +86-139-100-71-567
E: yokeling@twnetwork.org

Chandra Bhushan
Centre for Science and Environment
New Delhi, India
T: +91-965-028-2840
E: chandra@cseindia.org / k_amit@cseindia.org

Africa:
Eva Ombaka
ReAct / Health Action International
Tanzania
T: +255-767-535-202
E: e.ombaka@gmail.com

North America:
David Wallinga
HealthyFoodAction.org
Minneapolis, United States of America
T: +1-612-423-9666
E: dwallinga@gmail.com