

Global Antibiotic Research and Development (GARD) Partnership Garners Key Financial Support for Launch

[24 May 2016 – Geneva, Switzerland] A new joint initiative by the WHO and DNDi that seeks to develop new antibiotic treatments to address the major public health threat of antimicrobial resistance announced today that it has received the necessary seed funding to build its scientific strategy, initial R&D portfolio, and start-up team.

The mission of the Global Antibiotic Research and Development (GARD) Partnership is to develop new antibiotic treatments addressing antimicrobial resistance and to promote their responsible use for optimal conservation, while ensuring equitable access for all in need. GARD is being incubated by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases *initiative* (DNDi) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

‘We need more investment in research and development for new antibiotic treatments. Otherwise, we could lose the cornerstone of modern medicine, and infections and minor injuries which have been treatable may once again kill’, said Dr Marie-Paule Kieny, WHO Assistant Director-General. *‘But we also need to change the way we are using new antibiotics to slow down resistance building. GARD will endeavor to build in conservation aspects in the R&D process while making sure that any new products coming out of this initiative will be affordable for all.’*

At the launch of the GARD Partnership on the occasion of the 69th World Health Assembly in Geneva, DNDi announced that it secured commitments for GARD from four governments – the Federal Ministry of Health of Germany, the Netherlands’ Ministry of Health Welfare and Sports, the South African Medical Research Council, and the United Kingdom Department for International Development – as well as from the medical humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières, totalling over EUR 2 million for the incubation phase of two years.

‘GARD will apply a complementary approach to developing treatments to areas that have been inadequately addressed for decades by the current system for research and development’, said Dr Bernard Pécoul, Executive Director, DNDi. *‘GARD will focus on public health priorities, base its approach on partnership, and apply principles of openness and sharing of knowledge, as well as ensuring sustainable access to the treatments for the people who need them.’*

GARD is currently exploring a number of possible short- to medium-term priority projects that would address gaps in the R&D pipeline and works on establishing a longer-term business plan. The objective of the incubation period is to have three to four projects financed and running by the end of 2017, with the aim of GARD becoming an independent entity at that time.

‘GARD getting this support from donors from high- and middle-income countries alike is a sign of renewed political engagement to address this critical issue’, said Dr Manica Balasegaram, newly appointed GARD Director. *‘Today’s pipelines are far too empty, so the global community has to take a range of different approaches that break from traditional market-driven “business as usual”. We look forward to making an important contribution to this through GARD.’*

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About GARD

Stemming from both DNDi's revised [Business Plan 2015-2023](#) and WHO's [Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance \(GAP-AMR\)](#), the GARD Partnership was approved for incubation by DNDi's Board of Directors in December 2015.

The Director-General of WHO Dr Margaret Chan mentioned GARD at the recent open-ended meeting on CEWG follow up: *'GARD is being jointly put forward by WHO and DNDi. [It] targets products that industry will not develop owing to a lack of profitability. It will also pilot the use of alternative incentive models.'*

GARD collaborates closely with WHO to ensure disease and pathogen priorities are addressed, and will input and use data from the Global R&D Observatory. Focusing on unmet public health priorities, GARD will target interventions and access strategies where needs are greatest and strive for complementarity to work already undertaken by other actors in the field.

Dr Manica Balasegaram joins GARD after serving four years as Executive Director with the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) Access Campaign. A medical doctor by training, Dr Balasegaram began his career in internal and emergency medicine in the UK and in Australia, then joining MSF as a field physician in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. He later led DNDi's leishmaniasis R&D programme. His experience spans clinical and public health practice in neglected and infectious diseases, clinical trials and drug development, international work on health policy and access to medicines and involvement in a variety of expert technical committees, including for the ongoing UN High Level Panel on Access to Medicines. Dr Balasegaram will take up his position formally in June 2016.