



For immediate release: July 30, 2001

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WHO and PATH Appoint Director of Meningitis Vaccine Project

Vaccine Specialist to Head Project Aimed at Developing a Long-Acting Vaccine Against Bacterial Meningitis in sub-Saharan Africa

SEATTLE/GENEVA—Today the World Health Organization (WHO) and Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) announced the appointment of Dr. Marc LaForce as the Project Director for the WHO/PATH Meningitis Vaccine Project. This project, which was launched in May of this year, is supported by a \$70 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is a joint endeavour between the WHO and PATH, a Seattle-based international health organization

Dr. LaForce has a long and distinguished career in disease prevention, vaccinology and international health. He is currently the Senior Technical Officer of BASICS II, a child survival project supported by the United States Agency for International Development, and the Senior Technical Advisor to the Partnership for Child Health, Inc., in Arlington, VA.

"This critical project is off to a great start. In a very short period of time we have successfully brought on board Dr. LaForce, one of the foremost authorities on vaccines and international health, to lead this important project," said Dr. Christopher Elias, President of PATH.

"The meningitis epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa are devastating, and there is an urgent need to develop an effective vaccine against this disease. We are convinced that Dr. LaForce is the right person to move this forward," said Dr. Yasuhiro Suzuki, Executive Director, Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals, WHO.

Dr. LaForce received his Doctor of Medicine from Seton Hall College of Medicine and Dentistry, and completed his internal medicine and infectious disease training on the Harvard Service at Boston City Hospital. From 1966 to 1968 he served as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer in the Meningitis and Special Pathogen units at what is now the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. From 1972 to 1999 he pursued clinical, research and administrative work at

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the University of Colorado School of Medicine and the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry.

The Meningitis Vaccine Project is a ten-year program to put an end to the deadly meningitis epidemics that have plagued Sub-Saharan Africa for over 100 years. The project will develop and produce a meningitis vaccines tailored for adults and children living in Africa, and will ensure the delivery of these vaccines through mass and routine immunization programs in affected countries.

For information relating to the launch of the Meningitis Vaccine Project, please visit:
www.path.org/resources/press/20010530-meningitis.htm.

The World Health Organization (www.who.int) was founded in 1948. A specialized agency of the United Nations with 191 Member States, WHO promotes technical cooperation for health among nations, carries out programs to control and eradicate disease and strives to improve the quality of human life.

Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) is an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization dedicated to improving health, especially the health of women and children. PATH (www.path.org) identifies, develops, and applies appropriate and innovative solutions to public health problems, particularly in low-resource settings. Founded in 1977, PATH is headquartered in Seattle, Washington, and has program offices in Cambodia; India; Indonesia; Kenya; Philippines; Thailand; Ukraine; Viet Nam, Seattle, WA; and Washington DC.