

Countries of the Region to Meet This Year to Discuss Plan of Action for the Decade of Vaccines

Buenos Aires, 14 July 2011 (PAHO/WHO)—A regional consultation will be held with the countries of the Hemisphere from November to December 2011 to discuss the plan of action for the Decade of Vaccines, an initiative sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which has already pledged \$10 billion to research, development, and the distribution of vaccines in the coming years.

This was one of the results of the meeting arranged by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) with representatives of the Decade of Vaccines Collaboration and eight countries of the Hemisphere in Buenos Aires during the XIX Meeting of the Technical Advisory Group on Vaccine-preventable Diseases. The objective of this meeting, held on 8 July, was to share ideas to ensure that the strategies and lines of action for the Decade of Vaccines respond to the challenges facing national immunization programs in the Americas.

The purpose of the Decade of Vaccines is to extend the benefits of immunization to all people regardless of where they live, since vaccination is considered one of the most cost-effective interventions for improving the health of populations. In the consultation programmed for late 2011, the goal will be to include the heads of immunization programs, the people in charge of epidemiological surveillance, and the chairs and members of national immunization advisory committees.

During the Buenos Aires meeting on 8 July, the participants emphasized that in the Americas, inequities exist within countries, which contributes to the fact that a percentage of the population remains unvaccinated. They agreed that this implies the need to rethink both the approach and international cooperation to include middle-income countries.

Christopher Elias, Co-Chair of the Steering Committee of the Decade of Vaccines Collaboration, highlighted the efforts and achievements of immunization programs in the Americas, making special reference to the PAHO/WHO Revolving Fund, a group procurement mechanism for the purchase of vaccines, syringes, and related supplies for the Organization's Member States. Elias, who is also President of PATH, an international nongovernmental organization devoted to health issues, mentioned the two initiatives as examples of experiences that can be replicated in other regions of the world. He also talked about the vaccine research and development capabilities in certain countries of the Hemisphere, such as Brazil and Cuba, which could help guarantee equitable access to new vaccines. He called on participants to use the new

information and communication technology to improve immunization services so that people who have not been vaccinated can be reached.

During the World Health Assembly held at WHO headquarters in Geneva this past May, Bill Gates launched the Decade of Vaccines and called on government leaders to increase their investment in immunization, on donors to invest more in vaccines, and on pharmaceutical manufacturers to make efforts to enable countries with fewer resources to obtain vaccines.

Links:

Decade of Vaccines

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/press-releases/Pages/decade-of-vaccines-wec-announcement-100129.aspx>

Experts Call the Countries of the Americas Global Pioneers in Vaccination

http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5640&Itemid=1926

Jon Andrus Introduces ProVac, a Project that Supports Country Decision-making on the Introduction of New Vaccines

http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5645&Itemid=1926&lang=en

Immunization

<http://www.paho.org/immunization>

Vaccination Week in the Americas 2011

www.paho.org/vwa

Photos of the meeting

<https://picasaweb.google.com/paho.photography/TAG2011BuenosAiresArgentina>

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