

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES / DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS
INTERVENTION AT IGWG 2
Thursday 8th November 2007

Thank you Mr Chairman.

My name is Michel Lotrowska and I am speaking on behalf of Médecins Sans Frontières – Doctors Without Borders.

Médecins Sans Frontières' doctors are struggling in our tuberculosis programmes in the face of overwhelming odds.

We have neither adapted tests to detect TB or to determine resistance, nor drugs that are effective enough to respond to the HIV co-epidemic and the spread of ever more resistant strains of tuberculosis.

When drugs do exist for other diseases such as HIV/AIDS, they are often priced out of reach, or not adapted to poor settings.

It is precisely for this reason that we have come to the IGWG with high expectations.

We are looking to this process to break the cycle of neglect that diseases such as TB have suffered from for decades, and to provide solutions to the access to medicines crisis.

We are not the only ones with high expectations. This week, a group of TB experts outlined in the journal Public Library of Science Medicine - PLOS - new ways to accelerate TB drug development, making specific reference to the work you are doing here.

We welcome the number and the scope of proposals that countries are putting on the table. We are encouraged by the willingness of delegations to arrive at an agreement where we will have health needs-driven innovation PLUS access.

We also see that progress is slow. This is perhaps to be expected, given that the issues that need to be resolved are both controversial and complex - and will perhaps require more time than the allocated six days to resolve. Rome was not built in a day.

The recommendations of the CIPIH report will help guide the IGWG in the task ahead.

The IGWG should not limit itself to a limited set of diseases. The IGWG should help identify R&D gaps in type I II and III diseases, determine financing needs to fill these gaps, and discuss mechanisms to make sure new essential health products reach people that need them.

The IGWG should not support text that could be construed as going beyond the obligations under the TRIPS agreement.

The plan of action should unequivocally support the full use of the flexibilities enshrined in the Doha Declaration to enable generic competition to bring the price of essential health products down, without waiting years for patents to expire. And it must give WHO a strong role to make this happen.

Finally, we are particularly encouraged that the IGWG embraces the idea of exploring new mechanisms for financing innovation, such as an essential R&D treaty. After all, the mission of the IGWG is to find mechanisms to finance the cost of R&D, in a such a way that innovations are available and are affordable from day one.

Thank you.