

Women's Leaders Call for Eradication of Cervical Cancer

Scale up of vaccination, screening and treatment can save
250 000 lives per year

Brussels, 28 September 2007 - Women's leaders today called for the eradication of cervical cancer through the development of a global coalition to combat cervical cancer, a preventable disease that kills 250 000 women each year, 80 percent of them in developing countries. Cervical cancer is caused by the Human Pappilloma Virus (HPV) a common sexually transmitted disease. Persistent infection with HPV is responsible for 99 percent of all cervical cancers.

"In the near future, women around the world will not need to worry about themselves or their daughters, sisters, aunts, mothers and grandmothers succumbing to this disease," said President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia. "Today I would like to add my voice to those demanding that cervical cancer gets the international political recognition it deserves. We are at the threshold of a new era for its prevention."

The conference participants expressed a firm belief that cervical cancer can be eliminated through greater investment in vaccination, screening and treatment, and women and girls should play leading roles in decision-making at every level.

"We have great regional disparity even in Europe. In Eastern Europe, twice as many women die from cervical cancer. We can solve this," said Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Former President of Latvia, who addressed the conference.

"The low priority accorded the health of women and girls is a manifestation of gender inequality. Why else would childbirth be the leading killer of women in the developing world? Why else would there be

Hosted by:



skyrocketing increases in the proportion of those living with HIV/AIDS that are young women? We have a huge chance here, to demonstrate that the health of women and girls matters," said Joanne Sandler, Acting Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and a co-convener of the conference.

The disease primarily strikes women aged 35-50. This has catastrophic consequences on families and communities, especially in developing countries where women are the backbone of society. This further exacerbates the already damaging effects that HIV/AIDS has on communities where women are often burdened with great responsibilities for extended families.

The conference closed with concrete actions, both short and long term. Participants endorsed the Global Call to Stop Cervical Cancer, recognizing that a comprehensive strategy is required to reverse the threat of cervical cancer to women and girls worldwide. The conference also called on the pharmaceutical industry, donors and governments to explore innovative partnerships to increase investment in vaccines and screening programs. Vaccine manufacturers at the conference committed to tiered pricing schemes, aimed at making vaccines affordable and available in developing countries.

FIGHT AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER, 27-28 SEPTEMBER, BRUSSELS

The International Conference on the Fight Against Cervical Cancer held on September 27/28 in Brussels Belgium was convened by the European Commission and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and hosted by the Belgian Government. The conference brought together women's leaders, policy makers, pharmaceutical companies and private sector representatives, regulators, and health professionals calling for a global agenda on the prevention of cervical cancer.

ABOUT UNIFEM

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas: reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.

ABOUT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The European Commission is the executive arm of the European Union, headquartered in Brussels. The initiative of the Conference was led by its Directorates for Development Cooperation.

ABOUT THE BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Belgian Development Cooperation is the development assistance program of the Government of Belgium.

ABOUT THE EUROPE EXTERNAL POLICY ADVISORS (EEPA)

EEPA is a group of experts on the European Union's external policy with a strong focus on the EU's development programs in partnership with developing countries.

For further information please contact

Amanda Mitchell

Amgott Mitchell

+1 917 250 1175

amanda@amgottmitchell.com

#