

JOINT SCIENCE ACADEMIES' STATEMENT



Global Health June 2008

In 2008, the World Health Organisation (WHO) will commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration which called for "Health for all." The United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 launched the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) including three related particularly to health: reducing the infant mortality rate, improving maternal health and halting the expansion of HIV and other infections. The other five MDGs call for action on factors that are also critical for human health.

Diseases - Future Challenges

The world's governments and science communities need to work together to better understand how, where and why infectious diseases emerge and spread. Often these are affected by environmental or social stress. Countries need to cooperate to monitor and contain infectious disease outbreaks.

There also must be greater international focus on, and collaboration to address lifestyle-linked diseases. A rapidly growing number of people will suffer from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity-related conditions, and neurological and mental disorders. Smoking is a challenge that has to be addressed in a timely manner.

In order to combat threats to human health globally, education, sharing of information and experience are key. Public health measures which could make a great deal of difference and deserve more attention include:

- Safe water, basic sanitation, and hygienic measures.
- Food safety.
- Equitable access to medical information and treatment.
- Training and retention of qualified medical and health professionals, and educators.

Nations should ensure that sustainable development plans include measures to share information on, and address and/or prevent, diseases.

"The achievement of good health is not a matter for the health sector alone but also requires adequate levels of research, human security, education, economic development, nutrition and sanitation. The responsibility for health is shared by all policy-makers in government and international agencies'.

Social Capital for Human Health

Because there are many determinants of health, the achievement of good health is

not a matter for the health sector alone but also requires, for example, adequate levels of research, human security, education, economic development, nutrition and sanitation. Therefore, the responsibility for health is shared by all policy-makers in government and international agencies. Although governments remain ultimately responsible for assuring the conditions for health, they must work with civil societies, universities, business, and media among others.

The Way Forward

It is vitally important that we not only focus on the health of individuals, but also strengthen community health systems and the health workforce.

In order to address the challenges for global health, it is necessary to minimise the current obstacles to progress. Our agenda for change requires action across a broad front:

- Implementing previous funding commitments and encouraging the contribution of additional funding from all sources.
- Improving provision for public health programmes and access to health care.

- Identifying and advancing research and innovation required to address unmet health and medical needs and support the generation of innovative health-care products and services.
- Building a better evidence base on disease burden and on what interventions work – to assess the present situation and to target prevention and control measures.
- Meeting skill and infrastructure needs.
- Developing better coherence and connectivity among all those involved in addressing global health issues.
- Strengthening of preventive (prophylactic) medicine.

Conclusions

We, the academies of science of the G8+5 nations, commit to assist in meeting these health challenges. We will continue to build links within the world scientific community with the objective to strengthen the role of science in international development. The science academies will do more in the identification of emerging issues and pursuing systematic dialogue with national opinion-leaders, policy-makers and with multilateral organisations.

We urge our governments to:

- Increase international collaboration, scientific and medical research, locally appropriate capacity building, and technology transfer and sharing to achieve results.
- Commit to continued global monitoring, communication and sharing of information on all health-related issues. We recommend further concerted effort to identify major challenges in chronic and infectious diseases, as a basis for global collaboration on research and on disease management.
- Increase their commitment to evidence-based health and science policy-making.
- Further strengthen coordination of health-related programmes and leading international organisations, such as WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the world organisation for animal health (OIE).
- Promote public-private partnerships to encourage and appropriately protect innovation.

