

Statement WHO/1
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WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL PRAISES MAJOR CASH CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION

**Statement of Dr LEE Jong-wook, Director-General,
World Health Organization and Chairman of the Board of the Global Alliance
for Vaccines and Immunization**

"I salute the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Norway for the announcement, today, of over one billion dollars for global immunization. These large contributions will help save the lives of hundreds of thousands of people and prevent immense suffering and disability over the coming years.

Despite remarkable progress in the past three decades in immunization coverage world-wide, it is unacceptable that in the 21st century, about two million people still die each year of infectious diseases that could have been entirely prevented through basic vaccinations.

People in developing countries will benefit enormously from these additional funds which will further the development and introduction of new vaccines, increase access to underused vaccines and strengthen national immunization systems."

Background: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation today announced a US\$ 750 million contribution over ten years for the work of the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) of which the World Health Organization is a partner. The Parliament of Norway today pledged US\$ 290 million for 2005-2010 to support GAVI. Details are available on the GAVI website: <http://www.vaccinealliance.org/>

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