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In reply please
refer to:

Your reference:

Mr Michael Anderson
Director General for Policy and Global
Issues
Department for International Development
1 Palace Street
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29 March 2011

Dear Mr Anderson,

Response to the Multilateral Aid Review by the World Health Organization

The World Health Organization (WHO) secretariat welcomes the release of the Multilateral Aid Review (MAR) by the Department for International Development (DFID). WHO recognizes the contribution made by the United Kingdom to the Organization. In addition to financial support, the United Kingdom provides political leadership through the governing bodies and technical support through participation of experts in technical committees and advisory groups and the large number of WHO collaborating centres in the United Kingdom.

Evaluations of the work of the Organization are important, and particular attention is paid to reviews by individual Member States, and to joint assessments such as the one carried out by the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN), which are a complement to our own internal and external evaluation and audit processes. As a member state organization, WHO has the mandate to respond to all Member States to ensure the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. This encompasses both the development of global public goods, and assistance to national governments.

The Multilateral Aid Review paid particular attention to one aspect of the WHO mandate, performance in developing countries. In particular, the review scored WHO as weak in the areas of focus on poor countries and fragile states. Some of the measures being undertaken by WHO to improve country performance, including a more robust results chain, are highlighted below. However, WHO would also like to comment that the expenditure data used to determine the degree of focus on poor countries, was based on an aggregate of four specialized agencies' data. Following the successful roll out of an enterprise resource planning-based global management system, WHO will be reporting on expenditure and results achieved at country level to OECD DAC from 2012 onwards. We hope that this will enable DFID to have a clearer picture of the Organization's work at country level in the future.

cc: Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva

The Secretariat notes that the MAR acknowledges WHO's leadership role and convening power in global health, an arena which has become increasingly complex with a growing number of partnerships, initiatives, and implementing agencies in health. This new landscape calls for a re-examination of what global leadership means and what WHO's role should be, as well as the implications for the way that WHO works.

In early 2010 the Director-General initiated a series of consultations on the 'Future of Financing for WHO', and identified three key needs, which clearly echo the findings of the MAR: WHO should capitalize more effectively on its leadership position in global health; WHO must retain the flexibility to adapt to a changing environment and have the capacity to address new challenges; and, as WHO cannot sustain the diversity of its current activities, it must be more selective in setting priorities.

Following these consultations, the Director-General presented proposals for substantial reforms to the WHO Executive Board in January 2011. These comprise: a plan for strengthening WHO's central role in global health governance; a proposal for WHO's vision, priority setting and financing; and a detailed plan for managerial reforms, encompassing results-based management and accountability, human resources, and organizational design. The Executive Board welcomed these proposals and requested that a full programme be discussed at the next World Health Assembly. The proposed programme of reform will clarify WHO's roles and function at global, regional and country levels and will establish a priority-setting framework to focus the Organization's work where it has a clear comparative advantage. In addition, as part of the reform process, the WHO Secretariat is redefining its role in different groups of countries, according to their needs and capacities with a specific focus on poor countries and fragile contexts. The Organization has already launched a managerial response to the financial crisis which has included a number of cost-cutting measures, and which will lead to a significant reduction in expenditures, while maintaining core functions and maximizing results in priority areas.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for the transparency of this review and express appreciation for the ongoing dialogue throughout the process. I look forward to continuing discussions with DFID on taking forward the review.

Yours sincerely,


Dr Mohamed Jama
Assistant Director-General
General Management