# Major and neglected diseases in developing countries

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PURPOSE: To present a Communication regarding a European Programme for Action to Confront HIV /AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis through External Action (2007-2011)

CONTENT: In October 2004, the European Commission (EC) adopted a Communication entitled “A Coherent European Policy Framework for External Action to Confront HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (TB)” – COM(2004) 726. This was prepared based on a second progress report on the “EC Programme for Action: Accelerated action on HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in the context of poverty reduction” that highlighted key results and areas where the EC needs to reinforce or take further action.

The Council welcomed the policy framework, urged the EC and the EU Member States (EU MSs) to enhance their cooperation and coordination to confront the three diseases and requested the Commission to present a Programme for Action (PfA).

This PfA responds to the Council Conclusions on harmonisation,by proposing collective EU (EC and EU MSs) action to support country-led programmes to confront the three diseasesand action at global level in selected areas where the EU can add value.

The PfA will cover developing and middle-income countries. It is based on the general principle of benefiting from best practices and experience in the external actions and from the relevant Community policies. Later this year, the Commission will adopt a Communication on how to confront HIV/AIDS within the EU and in neighbouring countries. Country strategy programmes (CSPs) and European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans will define an appropriate strategy and set of actions.

A major objective of this PfA is to increase efforts to scale up interventions that have shown results. The EU should aim for a contribution that helps to fill the financing gap for the three diseases and meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and that reflects Europe’s weight and importance as an international partner in development.

The Commission proposes a series of concrete and cheap but effective activities such as the distribution of free bed-nets and contraceptives, as well as free access to voluntary counselling and testing for HIV /AIDS.

Together with global partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the action programme intends to strengthen regional networks to promote affordable and safe pharmaceutical products, to strengthen the regulatory capacity in partner countries and to support further research.

At country-level, the Programme for Action proposes to launch a political dialogue on issues of stigmata, discrimination and human rights and addresses the particular concerns of vulnerable groups, such as orphans and children. It furthermore emphasises capacity building in human resources and promotes clinical research and strengthening pharmaceutical and procurement policy. The Communication equally suggests synergies with related programmes on e.g. sexual and reproductive health and on human security issues such as safe schools.

The response to HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB is still under-funded. Additional funds will mainly have to come from external sources – both public and private. The projected annual external resource gap will continue to grow and is estimated to reach US$14.9 billion by 2007 – US$11.5 billion for HIV/AIDS, US$2.6 billion for malaria, and US$0.8 billion for TB.These figures only partly include resources for strengthening of the health system in partner countries, which is a prerequisite for progress, and the need for further investment in the research and development of new tools and interventions.