



SAMI Launch
Pretoria, 7th February 2006

Dr P. Mocumbi¹ Talking Notes

- 1. Introduction:** A word of appreciation – “It is true that without research, development cannot take place. There are immense opportunities for health research in Africa. To date investments in research have been modest. Health systems are weak and research has been neglected.”² I am very pleased to be here, in Pretoria, to witness the launch of the South African Malaria Initiative (SAMi). South Africa demonstrates strong commitment to address research and development challenges in a comprehensive way using evidence informed policies and promoting R&D through the National Research and Development Strategy adopted in 2002³. The launch of SAMi is an example of African ownership and empowerment needed to sustainable development.
- 2. The South African Malaria Initiative is a most welcome endeavour** – Malaria is the world's most important parasitic infection. It remains a leading cause of morbidity in developing countries, particularly sub-Saharan Africa where 90% of world's cases occur. The annual mortality from malaria is estimated to be between 2.5 and 3 million people⁴. Despite rapid progress made in science and technology in recent years malaria parasite remains a complex puzzle for the malaria scientific community. Malaria, TB, HIV/AIDS and many other infections affecting the poor fall in the category of neglected diseases in terms of drug research and development. Thanks to emergence of successful public private partnerships (PPPs), such as Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), and to the contributions of foundations, recently a change is taking place in developing drugs and clinical tools for neglected diseases, with only 13 new drugs developed between 1975 and 2000, but currently 63 projects underway.
- 3. The dawning of Africa's contribution to R&D for neglected diseases** – The AU/NEPAD “Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action” offers an in appropriate framework for development of national research strategies that include health research. We can now see some light in darkness of knowledge that prevailed in our continent when science and technology agenda is translated into investments in institutes and initiatives of clinical research in several African countries. At global level I have also witnessed a renewed interest in promoting North-South partnerships based on knowledge sharing. It is indeed time for Africa to move from simple consumer of tools developed elsewhere to take a leading role in discovery, development and delivery of new clinical tools for neglected diseases. To succeed I foresee only one way - partnerships and collaborations at country, regional and continental levels. Partnerships based on investment in technology transfer and capacity development. As High

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² WHO/Afro Regional Director, Dr Luis Sambo Opening and keynote address at the EDCTP Second Annual Forum, Durban, South Africa, 3-5 October 2005

³ Minister of Health, SA, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang Address to Participants of the EDCTP Second Annual Forum, Durban, South Africa

⁴ WHO/Roll Back Malaria, 2004

Representative of EDCTP I am very happy to say that we welcome SAMI's focus on applied research and research training essential to inform effective malaria control, including national, regional and continent wide collaborations. In its efforts to accelerate clinical trials of new and improved existing products, in particular drugs and vaccines as well as in helping to develop and strengthen capacities in developing countries, including the promotion of technology transfer, particularly in Africa, EDCTP seeks synergies and complementarities in its collaboration with like-minded organizations both in developing and developed countries.

4. **Possible areas of collaboration**⁵ - At this auspicious occasion I would like to say a few words on areas in which EDCTP can contribute:
 - EDCTP scope: Optimise synergies between research programmes of stakeholders and partners, and strengthen capacities and capabilities for sustained, durable clinical research in Developing countries focusing in principle on - a) HIV, TB, Malaria Vaccines, HIV Microbicides; b) HIV, TB, Drugs, Combined interventions.
 - EDCTP as funding agency benefiting initially from European Commission and EU member states financial support but having potential to mobilise additional funds provides grants through 4 operational schemes:
 - (i) Clinical trial grants; (ii) Capacity building grants; (iii) Training awards; and (iv) Networking grants.
 - Capacity Building grants, ex: (i) support training staff (laboratory staff, clinical monitors, clinical staff, nurses, financial managers, project managers, fieldworkers, data managers, bio statisticians) working on an African site where clinical trials are conducted; (ii) support the establishment of centres/nodes of excellence: with particular focus on reference laboratories and data management centres encompassing clinical trials design, conduct and analysis skills; (iii) support the ethics capacity in Africa providing support for National and Institutional Ethical Review Boards as well as training for ethics in Africa.
 - On addition to issuing grants EDCTP also aims to strengthen the regulatory environment for clinical trials in Africa by organizing workshops to train trainers for National Regulatory Authorities in clinical trial application and inspection of clinical trials; and training of Ethics Committee members on regulatory aspects of clinical trials;
 - Training awards for building leadership in clinical trials: MSC, PhD, levels; career development fellowships and senior fellowships.
 - Networking grants: to promote collaborative relations, synergies and proper coordination between researchers, institutions, at national, regional and continental levels that strengthen relations and ownerships towards sustainable capacity to find solutions to identified problems.

5. Concluding remarks: I therefore look forward with great expectation to our collaboration with SAMI as a consortium responsible for product discovery and improvement of knowledge on host-parasite and vector parasite relationships. It is my sincere hope that SAMI will be a vehicle for the acceleration of the discovery of new drugs, assays and diagnostics that can be fed into the development pipeline to lead to the deployment of new effective and affordable intervention measures as envisaged by EDCTP..

⁵ For more information consult EDCTP webpage: www.edctp.org