



### ***Greater collaboration urged to wipe out rabies***

**Geneva, Switzerland 26 September 2014:** An urgent call for more action to wipe out rabies has been issued to mark World Rabies Day on September 28<sup>th</sup>.

The World Medical Association, the World Veterinary Association and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control have urged all countries to implement an effective disease surveillance system to help stop the deadly disease. Rabies causes some 70,000 deaths each year, almost all of them in Africa and Asia and most of them young children.

The three organisations have also pressed for closer collaboration between the medical and veterinary professions to spearhead rabies prevention efforts.

Today's joint statement makes it clear that eliminating rabies in dogs, the source of the disease in 96 per cent of human cases, is possible.

Dr. Margaret Mungherera, President of the World Medical Association, said: "The transmission of infectious diseases from animals to humans, zoonosis, is something the world must take more seriously. Ebola, rabies and influenza are just three examples of epidemic diseases which originate in animals. But rabies is a disease where improved communication and collaboration between the medical and veterinary professions in their working practices can lead to prevention."

Dr. Faouzi Kechrid, President of the World Veterinary Association, said: "Rabies has aroused fear for 4000 years, but many examples, including recent improvements in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, prove that where there is good inter-professional collaboration sustainable rabies elimination is possible."

Professor Louis Nel, Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Rabies Control, added: "Global canine rabies elimination is possible. GARC strives to embody the One Health Approach to alleviate human suffering, improve animal welfare and reduce the financial burden of post-exposure treatments – an economic cost overwhelmingly paid by the already impoverished communities most at risk."

He said the three organizations wanted to encourage all countries to implement an effective disease surveillance system to help stop the disease and prevent future outbreaks, and to

implement laws for the prevention and control of rabies. Success in preventing, controlling and raising awareness about rabies depended on good collaboration between different professions and disciplines, in the public as well as in the private sector, particularly between the fields of human and animal health.

The joint statement from the three organisations comes on the 8<sup>th</sup> annual World Rabies Day. This year's World Rabies Day theme is #TogetherAgainstRabies, with a focus on the mutual benefits to people and animals of eliminating the disease in dogs, the source of the disease in 96% of human cases.

### **About the Global Alliance for Rabies Control**

The Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) is a leading non-profit organisation that works with governments, veterinary, public health and educational experts and communities to facilitate policy change and develop models to eliminate rabies in areas hardest hit by the disease. GARC's mission is to eliminate human deaths from rabies and relieve the burden of rabies in animal populations, especially dogs. For more information about rabies and GARC's work, visit <http://rabiesalliance.org>.

### **About the WVA**

The WVA unites the global veterinary profession on all its wide aspects and represents Veterinary Associations at local, national and regional levels and International Associations of Veterinarians working in different areas of veterinary medicine around the world. The WVA Mission is to assure and promote animal health and welfare and public health globally, through developing and advancing veterinary medicine, the veterinary profession as well as public and private veterinary services.

### **About the WMA**

The World Medical Association is the independent confederation of national medical associations with 106 constituent members representing more than nine million physicians. Acting on behalf of patients and physicians, the WMA endeavours to achieve the highest possible standards of medical care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

### **About rabies**

Around 70,000 people die from rabies annually, with over 99% of these deaths occurring in Africa and Asia, as a result of being bitten by an infected dog. Up to 60% of all dog bites and rabies deaths occur in children under 15 years of age.

Dogs are major victims of the disease as well, with up to 20 million killed every year as a result of mass culling through misguided attempts to curb the disease.

Rabies is 99.9% fatal, but it is also 100% preventable. Eliminating the disease by vaccinating dogs protects them and stops transmission to people. But despite the existence of effective,

relatively low-cost solutions to control animal rabies, people and animals are still dying tortured deaths because of this disease.

### **About World Rabies Day**

World Rabies Day, held on September 28 every year, was initiated by GARC in 2007 to create a global opportunity for people to unite in rabies prevention. Since then, it has grown year on year, with hundreds of thousands of people organizing and participating in local, regional and national events, on or around September 28 - and at other times of year too. Learn more at <http://rabiesalliance.org/world-rabies-day/>

### **About the One Health Approach**

The One Health Approach is a collaborative effort of multiple disciplines, working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and the environment.

### **For more information please contact:**

Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC)

Email: [media@rabiesalliance.org](mailto:media@rabiesalliance.org)

Helen McNeive: 0033 7 8686 7079

Website: [www.rabiesalliance.org](http://www.rabiesalliance.org)

Follow GARC: <https://twitter.com/RabiesAlliance>;

<https://www.facebook.com/GlobalAllianceforRabiesControl>

World Veterinary Association (WVA)

Email: [secretariat@worldvet.org](mailto:secretariat@worldvet.org)

Website: [www.worldvet.org](http://www.worldvet.org)

World Medical Association (WMA)

Dr. Margaret Mungherera WMA President

+256 772 434 652 (mobile)

Mr. Nigel Duncan – Public Relations Consultant

Mobile: (+44) 7984 944403

Home phone: (+44) 0208 997 3653

E-mail: [nduncan@ndcommunications.co.uk](mailto:nduncan@ndcommunications.co.uk)

website: [www.wma.net](http://www.wma.net)

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