



United Nations Office for Partnerships

Media Advisory

Digital He@lth Initiative Advisory Board Pledges Commitments to UN Secretary-General and WHO Director-General

NEW YORK CITY– OCT.26, 2009 - Following the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Board of the *Digital He@lth Initiative (DHI)* in New York, a series of commitments have been made by members in letters to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan.

As a unique, multi-stakeholder collaboration between the ICT and healthcare sectors and an implementation of the health-related Millennium Development Goals and other health priority areas, the DHI aims to harness digital health care solutions for the catalytic scaling up of interventions in even the most resource poor settings. In practice, it will map the current state of play in this emerging field, develop an economic model for policy-makers and practitioners, and put in place a partnership platform for fast and high impact country-specific projects of regional importance.

“If we are going to be able to deliver healthcare for all in this new century of connectivity, it will be through cooperation and partnership between the ICT and healthcare sectors, and I am very pleased with the start we have already made during the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Board of the Digital He@lth Initiative” said Dr. Hamadoun I. Touré, ITU Secretary-General and Co-Chair of the Board. “Digital health technologies today are now financially sustainable and viable and over the coming years large-scale projects can be deployed whose cost-benefits will easily outweigh the necessary investments”, he added.

With the health related-MDGs now seriously off-track to meet the 2015 deadline agreed by world leaders, the DHI will look to forge concrete deliverables via digital technologies for the accelerated achievement of targets for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, maternal health and child mortality. It will also highlight solutions via digital technology for the global crisis in human health capacity and resources (with a deficit of some 2 million health workers in sub-Saharan Africa alone) via the strengthening of health care systems, and push progress to treat and control neglected tropical diseases for integrated service delivery at the community level.

In addition, with the forthcoming climate change agenda focus on the diseases of climate change, the DHI will harness applications for measuring and monitoring, and prevention and treatment via technological means in this area. Likewise, as health care reform becomes a top political priority in developed and developing countries alike, address the growing and as yet neglected pandemic of chronic non-communicable disease with appropriate digital technologies will become of increasing importance.

"The *Digital He@lth Initiative* creates an opportunity for partners from the UN-system, from governments and NGOs as well as from the private sector to bring in their specific resources, skills and points of view in order to come up with innovative solutions for "old" health problems of the world's poor," said Prof. Klaus Leisinger, President, Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development and co-chair of the DHI.

While the world is at the brink of a tidal wave of transformational change in global health brought on by the digital revolution, the magnitude of this change must be fully comprehended by multiple players in time to put necessary technical, regulatory, legal and market mechanisms in place to take full advantage of its benefits. To date, though many digital health projects abound in many countries – whether in mHealth or eHealth – scant coordination or interoperability exists between them, deep data silos persist across programs, geographies, points of care and technologies, and few have been brought from pilot to scale.

"We live in a unique time where great technological advancements are exponentially driving communication and healthcare innovation such as the world has never seen," said Ericsson's CEO Carl-Henric Svanberg, "It is critical we harness these successes and apply them in ways that benefit all mankind. The DHI, which brings together the health and the ICT sectors, provides an excellent platform for global leaders in these fields to collaborate on solving major healthcare issues."

In their communications to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Director-General Chan, Advisory Board Members agreed unanimously to support a series of commitments contained in the Vision and Mission statement of the DHI (see attached), which sets out a ten point plan for concrete deliverables in cooperation with business, government, civil society and the multilateral system, and is linked directly to the 2010 and 2015 MDG milestones.

"The DHI is specifically designed to support MDG8 to *Develop a Global Partnership for Development in cooperation with the ICT and pharmaceutical communities*", said Amir Dossal, Executive Director, United Nations Office for Partnerships, "and we believe the initiative will form the basis of a strategic framework for new model partnerships across the ICT, pharmaceutical and health technology sectors with a view to concrete deliverables in the accelerated delivery of the health-related MDGs and beyond." The DHI has been launched with the support of the UN Office for Partnerships.

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DHI Partner Organizations

In cooperation with the African Business Roundtable, African Medical and Research Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, BT, Commonwealth Business Council, Ericsson, GAVI Alliance, Global Fund, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Global Information Infrastructure Commission, Global Health Council, Global Forum for Health Research, Google, ICANN, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative, International Business Leaders Forum, Microsoft, Millennium Campaign, Millennium Promise, Novartis, Oxford Health Alliance, Pfizer, The Earth Institute at Columbia University, The Rockefeller Foundation, Scientists Without Borders, Pfizer, UN Foundation and Vodafone Group Foundation Partnership, World Economic Forum

DHI UN Partners

In cooperation with the UN Office for Partnerships, Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Health Organization (WHO), Global Health Workforce Alliance (GHWA), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNAIDS, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Digital He@lth Initiative

Technology for Equity

Vision

To harness the full potential of information and communication technologies and digital user device technology to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for health, and to provide leadership to and coordination of the range of effective and outcome-oriented initiatives working across the health for development spectrum under the guiding principle of “technology for equity”.

Mission

Working with:

- Healthcare professionals, establishments and international bodies
- Researchers, research establishments and research leadership groups
- Government and NGOs at national, regional and international level
- Relevant UN Agencies and bodies
- Industry and industry bodies

To:

1. *Define* priorities for actions while mapping the landscape in global digital health.
2. *Baseline* and set targets for significant improvement across the MDG health priority areas and beyond.
3. *Facilitate* the propagation of best practice through cross learning, sharing, knowledge management technologies and proactive action.
4. *Define, create* and *implement* an economic model which ensures that the programme is built on sustainable foundations, delivers globally and that progress is secured into the future.
5. *Create* political will through advocacy of national digital health coordinators at the highest level of cabinet for an “all government approach”.
6. *Develop* a collective and multi-stakeholder “partnership platform” for digital health with indicators for measurement consistent with MDG 8 Target 18.¹
7. *Deliver* a series of concrete commitments and projects in digital health for MDG 8 Target 18 and, through strategic partnerships partners, identify the key enablers, particularly in the areas of infrastructure, R&D and standards; these enablers will secure success and take responsibility for ensuring the projects are sufficiently financed and urgently and delivered.
8. “*Cross-pollinate*” initiatives, particularly between the developed and developing world, building on lessons learned to accelerate progress towards equity of opportunity and service without reinventing the wheel.
9. *Develop* innovative finance mechanisms as they pertain to digital health.
10. *Advocate* and develop a global charter for digital health with relevant organizations and institutions.

¹ Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 8 Target 18: “Develop a global partnership for development in cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies – especially information and communications technologies.”