OECD Promotes International Co-operation to Fight Infectious Diseases

New diseases, the resurgence of diseases once thought to be eradicated or contained and the threat of deliberately spread infectious diseases are a major problem worldwide. The OECD is promoting international co-operation to detect, monitor, and combat these diseases using biotechnology and genetics.

Politicians, scientists, medical doctors and policy makers from developed and developing countries will meet at an OECD conference on Biotechnology for Infectious Diseases at the Gulbenkian Foundation, Av. De Berna, Lisbon, on 7-9 October. They will discuss ways to deliver the benefits of international agreement in the areas of information exchange, research, partnership and production to minimise the risk of disease.

Much recent global effort has rightly focused on HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Many other diseases such as sleeping sickness, dengue fever and West Nile fever are comparatively neglected in the international debate although they are having devastating effects on communities. Fears that smallpox might return, or that there could be an upsurge in plague or anthrax outbreaks, are adding to rising concerns about an effective global response to infectious diseases.

Many countries have already developed public health networks and there is ongoing research into infectious diseases. The conference will consider how these existing capabilities and tools can best be drawn upon to deal with real-world challenges and risks.

Conference participants will also discuss the best way to promote successful public/private partnerships for research and product development so that the needs of all countries can be met and to ensure that the production capacity for vaccines and medicines matches needs.

The agenda for Biotechnology for Infectious Diseases: Addressing the Global Needs can be found on the web at http://www.oecd.org/biotechnology

Journalists who wish to attend the conference or would like further information are invited to contact Helen Fisher, OECD’s Media-Relations Division (tel. [33]1 45 24 80 97 or helen.fisher@oecd.org).

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