

FOREWORD

As Director responsible for Public Health in the European Commission, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the publication of the Global White Paper on *Bacterial Resistance in Community Acquired Respiratory Tract Infections*. The White Paper represents a major contribution to the fight against antimicrobial resistance and I welcome the efforts undertaken by the International Forum on Antibiotic Resistance in addressing this complex issue from a global perspective.

Ever since the initial recognition of the significance of antibiotic resistance in human medicine, the European Union (EU) has been proactive and determined in tackling the problem. The EU Conference 'The Microbial Threat' in 1998 and its follow up in June 2001, the adoption of a Community Strategy against Antimicrobial Resistance by the European Commission in June 2001 and the Council Recommendation on the Prudent Use of Antibiotics in Human Medicine in November 2001 are indicative of the EU's commitment to facing this pandemic. That recommendation and a pilot project on surveillance of antimicrobial consumption in humans were launched at the 'EU Conference on Antibiotic Use in Europe', held on 15–17 November 2001 in Brussels.

The adopted strategy, given at http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph/others/antimicrob_resist/, gives a comprehensive overview of ongoing efforts and future activities within the Community with regard to surveillance, prevention, research, product development, and international co-operation with the view to stimulate further

development of programs of control. The Council Recommendation, as an important part of that strategy, encourages national governments to take the necessary measures to contain the spread of antimicrobial resistance, including a general awareness campaign, encouraging a 'prescription only' status for antibiotics and the improved monitoring of antibiotic consumption.

To be truly effective, the fight against antimicrobial resistance, like the pandemic itself, must cross international borders. For this reason, it will require extensive co-operation, particularly among national and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and learned societies.

The Global White Paper exemplifies such co-operation in bringing together experts from across the globe. This unique assembly of interested parties has generated a paper which critically evaluates existing knowledge and strategies, addresses omissions, and identifies tested interventions that could play a pivotal role in future strategies to combat antimicrobial resistance. I am convinced that it is only when we co-operate and pool our knowledge and experience in such a manner, that we will be able to combat the threat of antimicrobial resistance and preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for generations to come.

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