



# Pan-African Conference Focuses on Keeping the Medicine Supply in Africa Safe

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Regulators Meet to Address the Threat of Counterfeit Medicines in Sub-Saharan Africa

(BUSINESS WIRE)--An international conference to discuss the issue of counterfeit medicines in Africa started this week in Johannesburg. The aim of the conference, which is sponsored by Pfizer, is for representatives from sub-Saharan countries to discuss the threats that counterfeit medicines and unregistered generics pose for the safety of patients in this region and to develop joint plans of action to address this issue.

Twenty customs officials, medicine regulators and government representatives from ten sub-Saharan countries, as well as representatives from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pharmaceutical Security Institute (PSI) will meet over the course of three days. The program includes workshops during which the participants will share experiences and develop comprehensive action plans to help keep medicine supplies in Africa secure and safe.

“The threat that counterfeit medicines pose to society is very real,” said WHO Representative Dr. Moses Chisale. “Counterfeit medicines are present in all regions but those areas where regulatory and legal oversight are weakest bear the brunt of the problem. Even though we may not know the exact magnitude of the problem in different parts of the world, the problem is there and it is growing. Combating counterfeiting is a shared responsibility involving relevant government agencies, manufacturers, distributors, health professionals, consumers and the general public. Governments have to create the appropriate environment for the participation of all concerned partners.”

The WHO defines a fake or counterfeit drug as a medicine which is deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source. Counterfeiting poses an

important public health issue. A wide range of medicines, including Pfizer medicines, have been counterfeited to date. Counterfeit drugs can cause serious health problems, and can result in death, as has been the case in some countries where epidemics like malaria have been treated with “medicines” that have contained no active ingredients. In other cases where the active ingredient is absent or at very low levels, counterfeit drugs will simply provide no health benefit at all.

There are also cases where medicines contain far too much active ingredient and are potentially harmful for that reason. In addition, counterfeit drugs may have been manufactured in unclean environments without the normal environmental safety controls, or their production may have occurred in a substandard environment and they may contain dangerous pollutants.

“We believe that patients who require our medicines should get a safe and effective medicine and not a potentially dangerous counterfeit,” said Karl Lintel, Pfizer’s Regional Director for Africa. “We are committed as a company to do all we can to keep fake medicines out of the marketplace so that they are not a threat to patient health. This conference is a demonstration of our commitment.”

Counterfeit medicines are a global problem from which no region is exempt. While it is difficult to accurately describe the full scope of the counterfeiting problem, reported seizures of counterfeit medicines do serve as a useful baseline. Since 2004, authorities have seized more than 30 million counterfeit Pfizer tablets, and enough active pharmaceutical ingredients to manufacture over 50 million more.

#### About Pfizer

Pfizer Inc, founded in 1849, is dedicated to better health and greater access to health care for people and their valued animals. Every day, approximately 90,000 colleagues in more than 150 countries work to discover, develop, manufacture and deliver quality, safe and effective prescription medicines to patients.

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