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Press release

Former Prime Minister Prof. Mark Eyskens: MCR-1 and NDM-9 in bacteria may soon cause global unstoppable superbug outbreak – Threat to global trade

In his letter to the G7 Leaders in Ise-Shima Japan, PA International Foundation Chairman and former Belgian Prime Minister Prof. Mark Eyskens warned against the first ever unstoppable bacterial outbreak that combines the MCR-1 and NDM-9 genes. MCR-1 makes bacteria resistant to the last-resort antibiotic colistin. NDM-9 imbues bacteria with resistance to beta-lactam bacteria, including last-resort carbapenem antibiotics. Truly horrifying is the fact that both genes are horizontally transferable; they can transfer resistance against antibiotics from one bacteria to another in both humans and animals. The combination of the two would make bacteria resistant to virtually all available antibiotics.

In January 2014, the PA International Foundation published an Elite Poll among 150 top experts in science, research institutions, medical professions, hospital management, husbandry, food/feed production and Centers for Disease Control. Over 90 percent of these experts/respondents stated that all antibiotics may lose their efficacy within two to ten years. WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan announced that this may be the end of the antibiotics era; soon operations in hospitals would no longer be possible and many diseases that are currently curable would become lethal. Earlier today the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director, Dr Thomas Frieden, announced that the end of the antibiotics era had been reached for some patients. In Pennsylvania a dangerous E. coli bacteria was found in a woman that was resistant to last-resort antibiotics.

The UK Review on Antimicrobial Resistance has already identified the dramatic measures required to stop the unstoppable: immediately levying taxes on the sale of antibiotics used to promote animal growth in farming to ensure formal bans will actually be enforced. The Review's Chairman, Lord Jim O'Neill, also pleaded for the funding of new molecules that must provide humanity with a new range of antibiotics, breaking the resistance among bacteria. Prof. Eyskens called on the G7 to only use tax payers' funding for such research if pharmaceutical companies stop providing antibiotics to farms without strongly regulated prescription by veterinarians. Both the UK Review on AMR and the PA International Foundation call for the development of non-antibiotic alternatives to improve animal health and growth. This is particularly relevant for several Asian countries including China, India and Indonesia where the threat of outbreaks of unstoppable

bacterial infections is largest due to the overuse of antibiotics both in human healthcare and in animal production. An unpublished Chinese expert report warns of the devastating effects of AMR outbreaks for world trade. A first outbreak in China may lead to the immediate damage of 467 billion Yuan (63 billion Euro) to the Chinese economy. The most strict border checks against antibiotics and resistant bacteria in food and feed products, as among others proposed by the European Parliament, may bring such trade to a standstill. Indeed, many European countries already harbor poultry, swine and other animals with bacteria resistant against most – but not yet all – antibiotics. By consequence the AMR threat – dwarfing Ebola to minuscule levels of death and destruction – can only be addressed by immediate and joint action by all Governments. Further postponement of effective action is certain to lead to a devastating outbreak.

Further information: PA International Foundation, +32 2 735 83 96, info@pa-international.org; see also:

[*Final Report of the UK Review on AMR*](#)

[*PA International Elite Poll Result*](#)

[*Prof Mark Eyskens' Letter to the G7*](#)