

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

### **Advocacy Toolkit Launched to Halt the 'Runaway Train' of Cancer in Africa**

*Lugano, Switzerland/London, UK, 6 September 2012* -- Cancer kills more than seven million people a year throughout the world. This is more than HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined, and African countries, which carry a large part of the burden, are the least able of all developing countries to cope with the challenges it presents, says a consortium of international cancer organizations.

In order to try to create a better recognition of the rising burden of cancer in Africa where it is most needed –in Africa– a ‘toolkit’ for local cancer advocates will be launched Saturday, 15 September at a conference organized by the Africa Oxford Cancer Foundation (AfrOx) and collaborators: Cancer in Africa -- Building Transnational Research Collaborations. The toolkit has been produced by AfrOx, together with the African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC), the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). The objective is to encourage cancer advocates to become vocal at the political level, pushing for improvements in cancer health promotion, early detection, treatment and care in Africa by raising awareness among government leaders, opinion makers, health policymakers and the general public, in order that sustainable and affordable measures to tackle cancer can be put in place.

“Many African languages do not even have a word for cancer, and it is commonly perceived to be a disease of the wealthier parts of the world”, says Prof David Kerr, University of Oxford, an AfrOx trustee and former President of ESMO. “This is reflected in the lack of screening programs, for example. And although one-third of all cancer deaths are due to preventable causes such as tobacco, alcohol, obesity, physical inactivity and viral infections, if there are no public education programs, little can be done in the way of prevention. We hope that the toolkit will provide local advocates with the means to draw the attention of decision-makers to policy level solutions to this

disturbing situation, which has such a devastating effect on individuals and families as well as national economies.”

Without an advocacy plan to unite the advocate voice, the toolkit promoters say, the chances of change for the better in the provision of cancer services in Africa in the face of competing priorities are slim. What is needed is focused pressure from cancer groups –professional, patients-- and concerned individuals --on evidence-based measures that have been proven in Africa to make sure that those who are able to make decisions in favor of better policies and cancer plans actually do so.

“First of all, this means ensuring that decision makers are aware of the problem”, says Dr. Adamos Adamou, chair of the ESMO Developing Countries Task Force. “It is bad enough already, but by 2020 the World Health Organization predicts that there will be 16 million new cases of cancer every year, and that 70% of these will be in developing countries. The developing world will suffer the heaviest burden, with 8.8 million cases, over 1.1 million of which will be in sub-Saharan Africa. This is a runaway train coming down the track, and we have to do something to stop it before it is too late.”

“It’s a big problem, but we think that there are grounds for optimism”, says Prof Folakemi Odedina, the AORTIC North America Vice President. “With cohesive and concerted action, cancer in Africa can be tackled and advocacy will play a key role in doing this.” The first step is for advocates to define the scale of the problem in their country and to identify individuals and organizations who can influence policy. The toolkit provides guidance for those starting out with sections on working with decision makers and influencers, the development of national cancer plans, working with the media, involving patients in the development of research programs and collaborations, and fundraising.

The advocacy case studies referred to cover fields such as tobacco control, raising awareness of cancer screening and of childhood cancers, the importance of nutrition in preventing cancer and the availability of palliative care. The toolkit will be available on the websites of AfrOx, ESMO, AORTIC and UICC, and sent to ESMO members in Africa and members of AORTIC’s African Cancer Advocates Consortium. At the ESMO 2012 Congress in Vienna (28 September-2 October 2012), which is attended by over 15,000 oncologists, the toolkit will be promoted and hard copies available for attendees. The AORTIC 2013 International Cancer Conference: “Cancer in Africa: Bridging Science and Humanity” (21–24 November 2013, Durban, South Africa) provides a great opportunity for wide distribution and bringing advocates together. A master training program based on the toolkit will be organized by AORTIC and will train 25 advocates to transfer knowledge about cancer advocacy throughout Africa.

“Africa’s cancer survival rates are often less than half of those of more developed countries, with many people dying undiagnosed. Many countries do not have a single cancer specialist or a dedicated cancer center for the whole population. For example, only 21 of the 53 African nations have access to radiotherapy. These stark facts bring home the need for urgent action on the policy front and strengthening of the health system services. We have all seen the positive effects of cancer advocacy in Europe and the US, and we hope that the toolkit will empower African advocates to achieve equally impressive results in their countries”, says Prof Mary Gospodarowicz, UICC President.

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## Notes to Editors

The partner organizations (AfrOx, AORTIC, ESMO, UICC) recognize with special thanks the:

- European Association of Cancer Leagues for the provision of various case studies
- International Agency for the Research on Cancer for their review of the toolkit
- WHO African Regional Office for their review for adaptation of the toolkit for the African continent

The toolkit is available here:

[http://www.esmo.org/fileadmin/media/pdf/2012/press/Cancer\\_Prevention\\_Advocacy\\_Training\\_Toolkit\\_for\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.esmo.org/fileadmin/media/pdf/2012/press/Cancer_Prevention_Advocacy_Training_Toolkit_for_Africa.pdf)

### About AORTIC (African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer)

AORTIC is an African-based organization with membership from countries throughout Africa and the international cancer community. Our key objectives are to further research relating to cancers prevalent in Africa, facilitate and support training initiatives in oncology for healthcare workers, create cancer prevention and control programs and to raise public awareness of cancer on the continent. We strive to unite the African continent in achieving its goal of a cancer-free Africa and seek to make a positive impact throughout the region through collaboration with health ministries and global cancer organizations.

For more information about AORTIC please visit: <http://www.africa-aortic.org/> or email [info@aortic-africa.org](mailto:info@aortic-africa.org)

### About UICC

UICC exists to help the global health community accelerate the fight against cancer. UICC’s growing membership of 700 organizations in over 155 countries features the world’s major cancer societies, ministries of health and patient groups, in addition to influential policy makers, researchers and experts in cancer prevention and control.

UICC has responsibility for the World Cancer Declaration, World Cancer Day, World Cancer Congress and the World Cancer Leaders’ Summit. Additionally, it is a founding member of the NCD Alliance, a global civil society network that now represents almost 2,000 NCD organizations in 170 countries.

For more information visit: [www.uicc.org](http://www.uicc.org)

### About AfrOx (Africa Oxford Cancer Foundation)

AfrOx is working in Ghana to help train healthcare workers and to improve early diagnosis, treatment and awareness of cancer. Its aim is to develop a template for low-cost cancer prevention and treatment programs that can be replicated in other African countries. The four most common cancers in Ghana are liver, prostate, breast and cervical.

AfrOx’s mission is to partner with African countries and assist them with implementing comprehensive cancer prevention and control programs.

AfrOx believes that by forging alliances of individuals, NGOs and governments to share expertise, technology, training and a degree of philanthropic support, much could be done to help reduce global disparities in cancer care.

Only in this way can achievable and sustainable national cancer plans that are evidence based, priority driven and resource appropriate for African countries be developed, and AfrOx are committed to doing this.

AfrOx is a registered charity in England and Wales. Charity No.1131562.

To find out more about AfrOx, please visit [www.afrox.org](http://www.afrox.org)

### **About ESMO (European Society for Medical Oncology)**

The European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) is the leading European professional organization committed to advancing the specialty of medical oncology and promoting a multidisciplinary approach to cancer treatment and care. ESMO's mission is to advance cancer care and cure through fostering and disseminating good science that leads to better medicine and determines best practice.

As a trusted organization with 35 years of experience, ESMO serves its members and the oncology community through: a brand of excellence in post-graduate oncology education and training; leadership in transforming evidence-based research into standards of cancer care in Europe; dedicated efforts to foster a more favorable environment for scientific research; innovative international platforms to share expertise, best practices and disseminate the most up-to-date scientific research to as wide an audience as possible.

ESMO's scientific journal, *Annals of Oncology*, ranks among the top clinical oncology journals worldwide. ESMO events are the meeting place in Europe for medical oncologists to update their knowledge, to network and to exchange ideas.

To find out more about ESMO, please visit: [www.esmo.org](http://www.esmo.org)