

**Statement on Agenda Item 10.2 (D): Smallpox eradication: Destruction of variola virus stocks**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am speaking on behalf of the Churches Action for Health, People's Health Movement and Third World Network.

The 2011 Major Review on smallpox research effectively concluded that the WHO-authorized research programme is nearing its end. This would suggest that both the scope and number of active variola projects approved by WHO should be declining towards zero. This is because the need for new research is minimal and in some cases undoubtedly satisfied such as in sequencing.

We therefore note with concern that the 2011 report of the Advisory Committee on Variola Virus Research (ACVVR) shows that the actual trend is the opposite. Regrettably, the ACVVR continues to extend approval for a wide array of projects utilizing variola virus, including research in areas that it (and the Major Review) has previously concluded no longer require the virus.

For example, despite the fact that both the Major Review and the ACVVR itself have concluded that accurate and rapid smallpox diagnostics exist to meet public health needs, the ACVVR has decided to permit US researchers to develop still more diagnostic tests using live variola virus.

Furthermore, while the AGIES Major Review recommended a move away from animal studies with live variola, the ACVVR's scientific subcommittee has authorized still more animal model experiments with live variola virus in 2012.

We stress the urgent need for WHO to be winding down research with variola virus. Greater attention needs to be paid by Member States and WHO leadership to the operations of the ACVVR to ensure the Committee's integrity and that it fulfils its mandate to enforce WHA decisions to restrict research with live variola virus.

That greater WHO oversight needed on variola research, is further underlined by the fact that a US company has inserted a short segment of smallpox DNA into a related orthopoxvirus, which is in violation of WHO rules that expressly prohibit such genetic engineering with smallpox and its genes.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.