Statement by Medicus Mundi International
to the 66th session of the World Health Assembly
on agenda item 17.2 Follow-up of the report of the Consultative Expert Working Group on
Research and Development: Financing and Coordination
delivered by Alice Fabbri

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity of addressing the distinguished members of the
World Health Assembly on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health
Movement.

We wish to congratulate the WHO on providing leadership to the entire process to promote “Health
R&D” in a framework that delinks the cost of innovation from access to health products. Many
Member States have played a commendable role in developing a Global Strategy and Plan of
Action, elements of which have been elaborated as practical actions in the report of the CEWG.
The resolution on the follow up of the CEWG report represents a necessary step forward in this
process.

We wish, however, to bring to the notice of Member States some concerns regarding the
resolution. The resolution proposes some concrete actions, including the establishment of a global
health R&D observatory and the implementation of a few health R&D demonstration projects.

For these actions to be translated into real change, greater clarity is necessary. It is necessary that
these projects are coherent with the principles outlined in the GSPA and the CEWG report,
including the principles of open innovation and the delinking of the cost of innovation from the
price of health products. The terms of engagement with private for-profit entities need to be
clarified, so as not to replicate the negative features of the present IP based framework of
conducting research.

While the actions proposed in the resolution are small steps forward, fundamental changes in the
landscape of innovative activity related to health products, require more decisive and bold
measures. While we continue to ‘observe’ and ‘demonstrate’, millions will die not because new
products cannot be designed to prevent many unnecessary deaths, but because we are still to
develop systems of innovation that privilege human lives over patents and profits.

Real action continues to elude us, even a decade after the WHO set up the CIPIH to initiate a
process to stimulate development of new R&D models that would address the unmet needs for
new products, especially among poor patients. The GSPA had constructed a roadmap to redeem
the promise of the CIPIH report. At the heart of its recommendations lies the call to commence
discussions on a global R&D treaty. We are disheartened that the proposed resolution falls far
short of expectations by postponing discussions on the R&D treaty.

We urge member states to take a decision that is based on the consideration that we can save
many lives tomorrow if we choose to act today. We urge member states to set a clear date, in the
next few months, when discussions on the global R&D treaty can be initiated.

Thank you!