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Merck’s engagement in fighting schistosomiasis dates back to 2007 and involves 35 countries in Africa

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast, October 19, 2016/ - More than 100 million people, primarily children, have been treated for schistosomiasis since 2007
Merck provides WHO with around 10 million tablets for Ivory Coast for the first time

Merck (MerckGroup.com), a leading science and technology company, today announced that it has donated to the World Health Organization (WHO) the 500 millionth tablet to treat the insidious worm disease schistosomiasis. At a school located roughly 25 km north-west of Abidjan, representatives from Merck, WHO and the Ministry of Health of Ivory Coast jointly announced the launch of the medicine’s distribution in Ivory Coast.

Merck’s engagement in fighting schistosomiasis dates back to 2007 and involves 35 countries in Africa. More than 100 million patients, primarily school children, have been treated to date. “We are committed to further donating up to 250 million tablets annually until this devastating disease has been eliminated,” explained Belén Garijo, member of the Merck Executive Board and CEO Healthcare. “Donating the 500 millionth tablet of praziquantel today demonstrates our strong progress in achieving this objective,” Garijo added.

At a celebration held at the primary school of the village of Attinguie, representatives of the Ministry of Health of Ivory Coast and the British Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) administered the praziquantel tablets for the treatment of schistosomiasis to the children. Depending on their height, the children receive between one and five tablets. Furthermore, the teachers explained to them the causes of the tropical worm disease. For this purpose, Merck has donated a total of 20,000 educational booklets to WHO for Ivory Coast.

According to WHO, almost 20% of the Ivory Coast population requires treatment. To date, the U.S. development agency USAID and the Schistosomiasis Control Initiative (SCI) have supported the government of Ivory Coast in its fight against schistosomiasis. As a member of the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance, Merck has been cooperating with both organizations since 2014. Within the scope of this cooperation, the company has donated to WHO at short notice 3.6 million tablets for 2016. Consequently, Ivory Coast is benefiting for the first time from the partnership between Merck and WHO. For 2017, Merck will provide WHO with 6.5 million tablets for the West African country.

Schistosomiasis affects an estimated 260 million people worldwide. The infection rate is especially high among children, and the consequences are serious. The parasitic disease stunts growth, causes learning disabilities, and leads to anemia. Merck is donating praziquantel tablets to WHO as part of its responsibility for society and within Health, one of its corporate responsibility strategic activities. Praziquantel is well tolerated and the most effective treatment to date for schistosomiasis. In addition, Merck is supporting educational and awareness programs, researching schistosomiasis therapies for very young children and cooperating with

partners in the Global Schistosomiasis Alliance.