GENEVA ¦ 12 June 2013 - On **World Blood Donor Day** – **14 June** – the World Health Organization (WHO) calls for all countries to obtain 100% of their supplies of blood and blood products from voluntary unpaid blood donors by 2020.

The need for blood and blood products is increasing every year, and many patients requiring life-saving transfusion do not have timely access to safe blood and blood products.

In 2011, nearly 83 million blood donations were collected worldwide from voluntary unpaid blood donors, an increase of close to 8 million donations from 2004.

“Blood collection from voluntary non-remunerated blood donors is the cornerstone of a safe and sufficient blood supply in all countries. More voluntary blood donors are needed to meet the increasing needs and to improve access to this life-saving therapy,” says Dr Neelam Dhingra, Coordinator for Blood Transfusion Safety at WHO. “Furthermore, the safety and quality of blood and blood products should never be compromised.”

Regular voluntary unpaid blood donors are the safest source of blood as there are fewer bloodborne infections among these donors than among people who give blood in exchange for money or who donate for family members in emergencies.

Currently, 60 countries collect 100% of their blood supply from voluntary unpaid blood donors (35 are high-income countries, 18 middle-income countries and 7 low-income countries).

Six of these countries have achieved this target from a percentage lower than 75% reported in 2004: Cook Islands (from 40%), Kenya (from 53%), Nicaragua (from 41%), Turkey (from 40%), United Arab Emirates (from 59%) and Zambia (from 72%).
However, more progress is needed, with 73 countries still collecting more than 50% of their

blood supply from replacement or paid donors.

In low- and middle-income countries, blood transfusion is usually given for the management of complications of pregnancy and childbirth and the treatment of severe childhood anaemia. In high-income countries, transfusion is most commonly used for supportive care in heart surgery, transplant surgery, trauma and cancer therapy.

Providing safe and adequate supplies of blood and blood products should be an integral part of every country's national health care policy and infrastructure.

WHO provides policy guidance and technical assistance to support countries in developing national blood systems based on voluntary unpaid blood donations, and implementing quality systems to ensure that safe and quality blood and blood products are available and used appropriately for all people who need them.

For more information on World Blood Donor Day: www.who.int/world-blood-donor-day