

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Rising Global Threats Prompt Meeting of Top Virologists from Around the World**

March 9, 2011, *Washington, D.C.* – Top medical virologists representing more than a dozen countries recently ratified their participation in and support of the newly-formed **Global Virus Network (“GVN”)**, a global authority and resource for the identification, investigation, and control of viral diseases posing threats to mankind. The inaugural meeting of the GVN was held March 1-3 at the Embassy of Italy in Washington, and each of the attendees signed a Declaration of Participation & Support.

The GVN fulfills a goal of [Dr. Robert C. Gallo](#), co-founder of the GVN, Director of the [Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine](#), and widely known for his discovery of the first human retroviruses (including one which causes a specific kind of leukemia), co-discovery of HIV and the development of the HIV blood test. Since the early 1980’s and following the immediate HIV/AIDS outbreak, Dr. Gallo began promoting the need for global collaboration to overcome gaps in research during the earliest phases of viral epidemics and to ensure that sufficient numbers of medical virologists are trained to meet these challenges.

“Since HIV/AIDS first appeared,” said Gallo, “I strongly have believed mankind will best be served if the world’s leading virologists are organized and better equipped to deal with new and existing viral threats. The GVN fulfills this mission.”

During the two-day meeting, the attendees affirmed and ratified the following goals and objectives for the GVN to:

- (i) create a network of experts on medically-important viruses in partnership with existing surveillance programs and public health organizations and to control viral threats by providing a rapid, coordinated approach and comprehensive medical research response for all classes of emerging viral threats to mankind; and
- (ii) build collaborative research alliances within the network to undertake focused research on diseases with known and suspected viral causes which require specialized expertise from multiple members; and
- (iii) mitigate the critical lack of current and future medical virologists through practical training programs; and
- (iv) educate governments, public health organizations and the public at large on viral threats and advocate research and training to address those threats to mankind.

Comprised of representatives from more than a dozen countries and growing, the GVN will act as global first-responders to dangerous viruses and operate as an international clearinghouse to educate, inform and disseminate critical information to governments, health organizations, healthcare practitioners and the public-at-large. Of equal

importance, the GVN will work to overcome the critical shortage of trained medical virologists world-wide.

“There is a worldwide shortage of medically-trained virologists, and those of us leading the field must cultivate an environment of growth for future generations,” said Dr. Reinhard Kurth of the Koch Institute and a co-founder of the GVN. “My colleagues and I from Germany are thrilled to be a part of this historic initiative.”

“The GVN will strengthen relationships with developed and developing countries,” said Dr. William Hall of the University College Dublin, Ireland and a co-founder of the GVN. “Viruses don’t discriminate. They affect all of us. No longer are the days when viruses infect only small populations, or a small geographical area – today they can rapidly travel the world. As such, the interaction and cooperation of all countries will be essential for effective responses.”

“Medical Virology has traditionally been strong in Sweden”, said Dr. Anders Vahlne of Karolinska Institutet and site Director for GVN in Sweden. “However, there has been a trend in the later years for less physicians being recruited to medical virus research and clinical virology. I am positive that GVN will help us to increase the interest for medical virology in Sweden. Also, I am personally very thrilled with the prospect of a world wide group for the quest of detecting possible new or old viruses as causes for diseases such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis, for which there today is no known etiology.”

#### **About the Global Virus Network (GVN)**

*The Global Virus Network (GVN) is an independent organization comprised of leading medical virologists from Argentina, Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Pacific Rim Consortium (Japan, Korea and Hong Kong) to the A-IMBN, Russia (in collaboration with Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Uzbekistan and Ukraine), South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The GVN will be a global authority and resource for the identification, investigation, and eradication of viral diseases that pose threats to mankind. The GVN enhances the international capacity for reactive, proactive and interactive activities that address mankind-threatening viruses. The GVN addresses a global need for coordinated virology training, developing scholarly exchange programs for recruiting and training young scientists in medical virology. The GVN will serve as a resource to governments and international organizations seeking advice about viral disease threats, prevention or response strategies. The GVN will advocate research and training on virus infections and their many disease manifestations, and will act as a clearinghouse for the dissemination of information to authorities, scientific communities and the world publics.*