Health for All Now!
People's Health Movement

People's Health Movement statement regarding the World Health Summit:

The People's Health Movement (PHM)[1], as a world-wide civil society network, has a series of concerns about the World Health Summit (WHS) which is being planned as an annual event. According to the announcement of the first WHS (Berlin- October 2009), the summit will "address those health related issues which challenge us as physicians, scientists, political leaders and those employed in the health care industry" in response to "urgent questions arising from world-wide demographic trends, the financing of medical progress and innovation, the understanding of the potentials of medical research and health economy, and to emerging medical issues. Among these are health-related consequences of climate change. "

The PHM is concerned that although the summit speaks of participation of nongovernmental organisations (NGO's), the costs ranging between 290 – 490 Euro for NGO's will exclude those that could legitimately reflect the voices and needs of grassroots and marginalised communities. The summit is also by invitation only, which suggests that NGO participation will be hand-picked and limited.

PHM believes that, rather than creating a parallel policy forum, efforts and resources should be spent strengthening the World Health Organization (WHO) as the international coordinating body for issues related to people's health. WHO is one of the United Nation organizations in which each country has a voice. The WHA thus provides a reasonably democratic decision making process, despite mechanisms used by powerful member states to direct the decisions. We are concerned that the declaration of the World Health Summit is likely to preferentially represent the interests of the Global North, corporations and those who financially sponsor the Summit.

The announcement and the program of the first WHS does not acknowledge recent or current health related initiatives and processes undertaken at the global level, which can potentially have a positive impact on people's health. The website indicates that the Summit will, at best, play lip service to the importance of the social determinants of health and gives the impression that medical advances in individual care have been responsible for improvements in life expectancy rather than improvements in daily living conditions and more equal distribution of power. This is despite the fact that WHO received and endorsed at the 2009 World Health Assembly the report of the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/index.html

Globally, there were many events held to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Alma Ata during 2008. Globally, regionally and within countries hosting these events there has been an important recommitment to the principles of the Alma Ata declaration.

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[1] The PHM is a global network of people's and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and a wide range of civil society networks and social movements. The PHM was launched following the first People's Health Assembly convened in December 2000 in Bangladesh.

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In 2008, in reaffirming the commitment to the Alma Ata Declaration, WHO made primary health care the focus of the World Health Report. The report was titled *"Primary Health Care – Now more than ever"*. http://www.who.int/whr/2008/en/

In May 2009, the 62nd World Health Assembly passed two resolutions which continue to reflect this trend. The resolutions were: *Primary health care and health system strengthening*; and *Social Determinants of Health*.

In light of the above, the PHM raises specific concerns:

- The theme, aims, focus and structure of the planned meeting: We are in agreement with the summit's statement that "health is a fundamental human right"; however we note with concern the prominence of large pharmaceuticals & other corporate partners. This seems counter to the statement above. The profit motive that characterizes the corporate sector results in at best, human rights being secondary and at worst being violated, with negative consequences for health. The programme on the website suggests the WHS will be promoting the private health industry.

- By nature of its structure, with representation from countries around the world, WHO is accountable to the countries represented, and through this to the low and middle income countries. We are concerned that the WHS has given the private health industry such a central role in the planned Summit. The private health industry is primarily accountable to its shareholders and as such, is driven by profit. It cannot be given a place at the centre of global health decision-making – this clearly is a conflict of interest. The marginalisation of the WHO over the last number of years and the growth in power of new and often unaccountable actors in global health decision-making, has not been to the benefit of many poor countries. The PHM believes that global efforts to improve health should be invested in strengthening the WHO as well as country governments and their community organisations, rather than creating new initiatives with the potential to undermine the role of WHO and its member states in global health governance.

The People's Health Movement believes that such a decision-making process for global health through the planned industry-dominated annual summit could be counterproductive to achieving Health for All and can, in fact, have a negative impact on people's health. We urge the World Health Organisation, the Lancet and other organisations listed, as well as the "M8 Alliance" (academics, universities and health centres), to exercise caution and consider the concerns we raise earlier before engaging with the WHS.

Finally, the PHM is concerned about the high profiling of the planned summit through having it convened under the High Patronage of two of the world leaders. We kindly request Ms. Merkel and Mr. Sarkozy to provide their support to assist the WHO to honour its constitution and be provided with the resources required to be the leading body co-ordinating global efforts to improve people's health.

Prof Fran Baum and Dr Prem John
Co-chairs, Steering Council
People's Health Movement