



MOREHOUSE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Statement of The Honorable Louis W. Sullivan, M.D.

President, Morehouse School of Medicine

May 6, 1999

I am honored to announce today that the Morehouse School of Medicine is joining Bristol-Myers Squibb Company's SECURE THE FUTURE initiative to fight HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa where the disease is taking an unspeakable human toll.

SECURE THE FUTURE is the largest corporate commitment to fight HIV/AIDS in history. It is a model of good corporate citizenship. And it is a model for how the private sector can partner with academic and research institutions, community-based organizations, health care providers and the public sector to tackle a public health crisis of mammoth proportions.

But what matters most is not just the unprecedented generosity behind SECURE THE FUTURE - it is the unequalled focus on making the greatest difference in saving people's lives.

That is because it targets the region of the world where HIV/AIDS is taking the lives of eight of every 10 people who die of AIDS; and it combines a needed commitment to research with an innovative community-based outreach and education effort that will impact the most people.

This initiative touches me deeply. In my work as a physician, teacher and public health advocate, I have seen the rise of HIV/AIDS and sought to stop the horrific tragedies that lie in its wake. Indeed, fighting HIV/AIDS was at the top of my agenda throughout my tenure as secretary of health and human services.

This project also deeply touches the institution I have served for most of the past two-and-half decades, the Morehouse School of Medicine. Our mission is to recruit and train minority and other students to serve the primary health care needs of the medically underserved. Too often, that means preventing and treating HIV/AIDS. In the United States, HIV/AIDS has disproportionately hit the African American community; on a global scale, HIV/AIDS has disproportionately hit people living in Southern Africa.

Thus, we at Morehouse School of Medicine are dedicated to applying our resources, our energy, our knowledge and our talent to saving the lives of people -from Savannah to Soweto - who have contracted the HIV virus or who are at risk of

doing so.

We are delighted that SECURE THE FUTURE will provide 25 African public health professionals with fellowships to study community-based public health at the Morehouse School of Medicine.

I believe the community focus of our teaching and training will prove invaluable to the fellows. And I hope that the skills, techniques and support we provide them will prove equally invaluable to the communities they will serve when their fellowships end.

I am also pleased that 25 American public health professionals will receive fellowships to go to the Medical University of Southern Africa, MEDUNSA, to work with community-based organizations and improve their effectiveness. It is my hope that Morehouse School of Medicine students and graduates will participate in this exchange in large numbers, for I know how much they have to contribute.

In addition, we will provide guidance to the Bristol Myers-Squibb Foundation Community Outreach and Education Fund to improve the often dismal prospects for women and children dependent on others for financial and medical support.

It is a privilege to work not only with Bristol-Myers Squibb to SECURE THE FUTURE, but with so many other fine institutions: UNAIDS, the Harvard AIDS Institute, Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital, MEDUNSA, and other African schools of medicine.

South African President Nelson Mandela has said:

AIDS kills those on whom society relies to grow crops, work in the mines and factories, run the schools and hospitals and govern countries.... It creates new pockets of poverty when parents and breadwinners die and children leave school earlier to support the remaining children.

At a time when this vital region of the world is experiencing a renaissance, HIV/AIDS has already taken 11.5 million human lives and threatens to undermine the enormous social and economic progress made in recent years.

All of us who have the resources, the knowledge and the skills to fight HIV/AIDS have a moral responsibility to take action. Bristol-Myers Squibb's SECURE THE FUTURE project provides the means. And so I am extremely proud that Morehouse School of Medicine is a part of this outstanding, urgently-needed effort.

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program is administered by the National School of Public Health at the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA).

“I believe the community focus of our teaching and training will prove invaluable to the fellows,” Dr. Sullivan said. “And I hope that the skills, techniques and support we provide them will prove equally invaluable to the communities they will serve when their fellowships end.”

As part of this exchange, 25 American public health professionals will receive fellowships to go to MEDUNSA and work to improve the effectiveness of community-based organizations in Southern Africa.

Noting that Bristol-Myers Squibb is making the largest commitment of any corporation in history to fight HIV/AIDS, Dr. Sullivan called SECURE THE FUTURE, “a model of good corporate citizenship. And it is a model for how the private sector can partner with academic and research institutions, community-based organizations, health care providers and the public sector to tackle a public health crisis of mammoth proportions.

“But what matters most is not just the unprecedented generosity behind SECURE THE FUTURE – it is the unequaled focus on making the greatest difference in saving people’s lives,” Dr. Sullivan commented.

The Morehouse School of Medicine is a historically black institution whose mission is to recruit and train minority and other students as physicians and biomedical scientists committed to the primary health care needs of the medically underserved. Established in 1975, it became independent of Morehouse College in 1981. with the exception of his four years as secretary of health and human services, Dr. Sullivan has been president of the Morehouse School of Medicine since its founding.