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For Immediate Release

Malaria Vaccine Initiative Supports Far-Reaching Senate Effort Aimed at Fighting AIDS, Malaria, And TB

ROCKVILLE, MD (17 May 2002) – The Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) voices strong support for a new Senate reauthorization bill aimed at ramping up the U.S. effort to combat AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. These diseases infect hundreds of millions of people around the world, with ravaging effects on families, communities, and the economic development capacity of poor nations. Malaria alone kills three children every minute.

The bi-partisan "U.S. Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria Act of 2002" (S.2525) introduced in the U.S. Senate yesterday by Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Bill Frist, MD (R-TN) is a comprehensive, long-term strategy aimed at harnessing worldwide resources for research, development, and implementation activities to control and eventually eliminate these deadly diseases. The proposed legislation would provide new funding for prevention programs, treatment, vaccine development, and education.

"The Kerry-Frist bill goes a long way toward ensuring increased global support for controlling three of the world's deadliest diseases. It also recognizes the significant impact these diseases have around the world, especially in developing countries that lack adequate resources to fight these battles alone," says MVI Director Regina Rabinovich, M.D. "MVI applauds the inclusion of increased funding for malaria control and malaria vaccine development."

Forty percent of the world's population is at risk of malaria—a disease with devastating health, social, and economic consequences. Children under the age of five represent at least 75 percent of the estimated 2.7 million deaths caused by malaria each year, and adult illness leads to significant losses in productivity. According to Dr. Rabinovich, the development and implementation of an effective malaria vaccine would make a tremendous difference in the battle against this misery-producing disease.

"We are also pleased to see the Kerry-Frist bill acknowledge the role of public-private partnerships as a critical tool in accelerating the development of safe, effective, and accessible vaccines where an infusion of new resources and support from both sectors is necessary," adds Dr. Rabinovich. "The Senators should be congratulated for their dedication in confronting this global health crisis and accepting the challenges that lie ahead."

The bill also increases support for The Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria; The Vaccine Fund; and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. Senators Kerry and Frist are senior members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Joining them in support of this legislation are co-sponsors Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE), Jesse Helms (R-NC), Tom Daschle (D-SD), Russell Feingold (D-WI), Chris Dodd (D-CT), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Mike DeWine (R-OH), and Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

The Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI) was created with an initial US\$50 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH). MVI seeks to accelerate the development of promising malaria vaccine candidates and ensure their availability for the developing world. For further information about MVI, visit the Web site at www.MalariaVaccine.org. PATH (www.path.org) is dedicated to improving health, especially the health of women and children.