17 March 2015 – At the WHO-hosted *Ministerial Conference on Global Action Against Dementia* the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland today announced that **over US$ 100 million will be invested in a pioneering new global *Dementia Discovery Fund***. Major pharmaceutical companies have committed in principle to investing in promising research efforts for dementia through the project, along with the nongovernmental organization Alzheimer's Research UK and the United Kingdom Government. The announcement was welcomed as the type of innovative mechanism that could bring about a breakthrough in treatment.

At this WHO Conference, supported by the Department of Health of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 80 countries joined experts from the research, clinical and advocacy communities to discuss how, collectively, they could move forward action on dementia at the global level.

Participants highlighted the growing problem of dementia as a global public health challenge. The World Health Organization committed to leading and coordinating efforts on dementia. It also pledged to establish a Global Dementia Observatory that will monitor disease prevalence and dementia care resources in Member States and track the establishment of national dementia policies and plans.

"There is a tidal wave of dementia coming our way worldwide." said WHO Director-General, Dr Margaret Chan. "We need to see greater investments in research to develop a cure, but also to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia and the support given to their caregivers."

There was clear consensus on the need for coordinated efforts to track evolution of the disease burden, create policies to address the impact of dementia, and conduct research for treatment and improved, cost-effective care.

At least 19 countries [1] already have a national dementia policy or plan. According to WHO, priority actions in such plans should include raising awareness of the condition and its risk factors, building capacity for timely diagnosis, commitment to good quality continuing care and services, caregiver support, workforce training, and research.

At the outcome of the Conference, participants called for action to strengthen global efforts against dementia. "We have been running behind the curve with dementia for a long time," said Dr Chan, "but several recent events tell us that we are catching up. We must weave these multiple new initiatives into a comprehensive plan that can work in all countries. Government commitment will be key."

About dementia

More than 47 million people are living with dementia. Sixty percent of these people live in low- and middle-income countries. Driven by population ageing, this number is expected to triple by 2050. Already, dementia and cognitive impairment are the leading chronic disease contributors to disability and dependence among older people worldwide.

In 2010, the worldwide cost of dementia, mainly driven by social care needs, was estimated at US$ 604 billion. Without breakthroughs in effective treatment and care, these costs are set to soar, with costs growing fastest in low- and middle-income countries.

For more information:
www.who.int/dementia