

# There for the saving

**Desmond Turner** announces a new all-party group dedicated to the achievable goal of protecting children in the developing world from pneumococcal disease



Dr Desmond Turner is chair of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on pneumococcal disease prevention in the developing world

The official launch of the all-party parliamentary group (APPG) on pneumococcal disease prevention in the developing world was held on Wednesday March 14, addressed by Hilary Benn, secretary of state for international development.

The group has been formed in response to the urgent need to improve child survival and tackle the devastating impact of pneumococcal pneumonia and meningitis in the developing world. MPs and peers were shocked that pneumococcal disease killed so many of the world's most vulnerable children.

According to the World Health Organization, pneumococcal pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis are responsible for 1.6 million deaths each year, including up to one million children. Ninety per cent of pneumococcal pneumonia deaths occur in the developing world, and sadly, children with HIV/AIDS are up to 40 times more likely to contract the disease.

Without a co-ordinated international plan to introduce a routine pneumococcal vaccination, it could take 20 years for the vaccine to reach the children who need this intervention most.

The UK government has been at the forefront of international efforts to promote such a co-ordinated plan, and recently demonstrated its commitment to tackling pneumococcal disease when, on February 9, it joined Canada, Italy, Norway and Russia together with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in pledging \$1.5bn to launch the first advance market commitment (AMC) for pneumococcal vaccines.

This pilot AMC will speed the development and availability of new



Meningitis vaccinations are routine here – the developing world is not so lucky

vaccines by creating a guaranteed market in developing nations for manufacturers, and provisions to assure long-term sustainable supply and price for the world's poorest countries.

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Through the use of extended protection vaccines, this AMC has the potential to save the lives of 5.4 million children by 2030. It is a vital step towards achieving the United Nations' millennium development goal of

reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015.

As an all-party group, we will work to raise awareness amongst our colleagues nationally, across Europe and around the world about pneumococcal disease, its prevention through vaccination, and international efforts to ensure sustainable financing.

In January this year philanthropist Bill Gates stated on BBC Radio 4 that the work done by the UK government with the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) had made the UK a change agent in the fight against poverty in the developing world. Our all-party group will do what it can to support this vital process.

For further information, please visit [www.appg-preventpneumo.org](http://www.appg-preventpneumo.org) ■