



Welcome address by Dr Alex Dodoo, MeTA-Ghana co-Chair at the Launch of the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA) in Ghana, 12th November 2008

Distinguished invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me extraordinarily great pleasure to welcome you to the launch of the MeTA Initiative in Ghana. I am sure most of you are asking the question which I have also been asked several times by many people: – what is MeTA? You will no doubt hear a lot about MeTA this morning but I will start by giving a simple idea of what MeTA is all about. MeTA stands for the **Medicines Transparency Alliance** which is a multi-stakeholder alliance working to improve **ACCESS** and **AFFORDABILITY** of medicines to all those who are unable to access basic and essential medicines due to *high cost* or *local unavailability*.

As most of you are aware, the availability of good quality, affordable medicines is affected by several factors. The appropriate medicines have to be selected from the thousands available; then they have to be procured after involving the relevant regulatory authorities and agencies in their registration, importation or local manufacture. When they arrive in the country or at the factory gates, these medicines have to be *distributed* to public and private facilities including hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and licensed chemical sellers' shops nationwide. They then have to be priced and supplied by licensed professionals in licensed premises. Clearly, this whole process is extremely complex process and a weakness in any one of the various areas mentioned could have a huge impact on the price and/or availability of the medicine to the consumer.

How then do we ensure that all the players in the medicines field are playing according to the rules and working hard to ensure that the

patient gets the best possible deal? How do we ensure that the poor old lady in the village obtains all the essential medicines she needs at prices which are fair? How do we ensure that the quality of these medicines is good and that her hard-earned money is used most cost-effectively?

In the main, this relies on the availability of credible information to all players so that we each watch over each other. MeTA therefore brings together several stakeholders to collect, analyse, disclose and apply data influencing medicine procurement, promotion and supply. The main partners in MeTA are the **Public Sector**, the **Private Sector** and **Civil Society** including patients' representatives, communities, NGOs, faith-based organisations and the media.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the importance of good quality medicines to the attainment of excellent health is not in doubt. In creating wealth through health in our beloved Ghana, it is clearly important that we ensure that all medicines in the country are of the best possible quality, are easily available from registered premises, are prescribed and dispensed properly and are used rationally. This calls for an alliance of all those who use medicines and those whose lives are affected in any way by medicines. This alliance should be willing to disclose and share information and to use that information to improve the availability, affordability and use of medicines. This is what MeTA stands for and this is the cause to which we are kindly, gently and passionately enlisting your support and involvement.

On behalf of the Ministry of Health, MeTA-Ghana and my co-Chair, I welcome you once again to the launch of the Medicine Transparency Alliance in Ghana. You are welcome.