Dear friends of TDR,

I am pleased to share with you *Making a Difference, TDR Strategic Plan 2012-2017*, which we developed in consultation with our governing bodies (Joint Coordinating Board, Standing Committee and Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee) and colleagues at the World Health Organization. This short document outlines our vision and mission and defines the goals we are pursuing and the ways in which we intend to achieve them.

This is an important milestone for TDR – we are building from our areas of strength and expertise to strike out into areas where we can make a real difference to people’s health. Capacity building and generating evidence for the application of best tools, practices and treatments to combat infectious diseases of poverty are once more moving to the forefront of TDR’s mission.

We are streamlining our operations to optimize cost effectiveness, working more through our partners. TDR staff will transition from hands-on project activities to a facilitation and oversight role, supporting investigators in the field. We will use the advantages of our position in the World Health Organization to help improve disease control by supporting research and research capacity building where most needed.

The new strategy marks a conscious move away from product development – a core competence in TDR’s early years, which has successfully been taken up in recent years by several public-private product development partnerships. TDR is now focused on closing vital gaps in public health that exist in many countries, such as getting appropriate diagnostic tools and treatment to those who need it most, by using implementation research to identify and break through bottlenecks in reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We also intend to make special efforts in integrating capacity building in what we do and contributing to knowledge management of best practices and evidence generated through health research.

We greatly appreciate the continued strong support we receive from our key donors who provide core funding to the Programme, which gives us the flexibility to go ahead with the implementation of this strategic plan according to the priorities set by our governing bodies.
The key element running through all our work is global partnerships. Some recent examples of partnerships on specific activities which are expected to achieve concrete health impacts include:

- Working with Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to expand the traditional vector control research portfolio to include environmental factors such as climate change and social and economic aspects;

- Working with the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) to test operational strategies that support the elimination of visceral leishmaniasis in South Asian countries;

- Working with the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to address obstacles for early diagnosis in tuberculosis control;

- Working with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Foundation for the National Institutes of Health to develop guidance for governments on how to manage the social and ethical issues around the release of mosquitoes genetically modified to not carry malaria and dengue;

- Working with researchers in Africa and South-East Asia to look at the long-term impact of surviving malaria and the connection to cognitive disabilities;

- Working with UNICEF to strengthen country and regional capacity for generating evidence for programme implementation in 5 countries in sub-Saharan Africa; and

- Hosting the Secretariat of ESSENCE on health research, which is a network of donors to harmonize best practices for international support to research and research capacity building.

TDR aims to be a reliable, strong and active partner in the worldwide efforts to combat diseases of poverty, and we believe this new roadmap will help us work with you to make a difference.

Dr John Reeder
Director, TDR

The strategy publication is available online at: www.who.int/tdr