

For immediate release

Global Childhood Cancer Organizations Unite to Demand Action at UN General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases (UNGASS) in New York

Geneva | 16 September 2011 – The International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP) and the International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organizations (ICCCPO) will be joining forces at the First United Nations High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases taking place in New York this week to highlight the urgent need to address the fight against cancers of children and young adults worldwide. The two organizations represent over 1500 paediatric oncology medical professionals and 138 parent support organizations from countries all over the world accounting for over 84% of the global population.

SIOP and ICCCPPO are demanding that the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) community integrate the fight against childhood cancer in key discussions at the upcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). Dr. Gabriele Calaminus, SIOP president notes: “we would like to ensure that the message of hope for children with cancer and their families is brought to the attention of world leaders, politicians and key policy makers present at the meeting. We are seeking political commitment and swift action from these leaders to address the challenges and struggles that children with cancer and their families are confronted with each and every day.” Calaminus adds, “The time to act is now! Complacency on the part of decision-makers will only exacerbate the situation, especially in low- and middle-income countries where the large majority of children with cancer live and where access to appropriate treatment, care and support remains bleak.”

“Cancer in children is but a fraction of the global cancer burden, but for children with cancer and their families, it is the difference between life and death... hope and despair,” passionately explains Benson Pau, a father from Hong Kong who lost his child to cancer and is the chairperson of ICCCPPO. Mr. Pau is attending the proceedings in New York.

Each year 175,000 children worldwide are newly diagnosed with cancer, of which an estimated 90,000 will die from the disease. At the end of today, some 250 children around the world will lose their lives to cancer. These numbers are staggering given the fact that 70% of all childhood cancers are curable. Cancer is the second leading cause of death among children in developed countries. While eighty percent (80%) of children with cancer survive in wealthier countries, the reality is vastly different for those who live in resource-challenged settings where 80% of all children with cancer live and where knowledge about childhood cancer remains limited. Childhood cancer is often detected too late for effective treatment and is often compounded by very limited access to appropriate treatment and care, resulting in approximately eighty percent (80%) of them dying.

SIOP and ICCCPPO have prepared a joint Call to Action for participants and key-decision makers attending the High-level meeting. More information about SIOP and ICCCPPO can be obtained by visiting their society websites at www.siop.nl and www.icccpo.org, respectively.

About the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP)

Established in 1969, the International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP), with over 1500 members, is the leading global organization concerned with the issues of children and young people who have cancer. The society envisions that “no child should die of cancer.” To realize this vision, SIOP’s mission are to: (1) ensure that each child and young adult with cancer has access to state-of-the-art treatment and care; (2) ensure that all involved in childhood cancer worldwide, have access to the latest progress through meetings, networking, and continuing professional development; (3) support those caring for children and young adults with cancer to provide the best curative and palliative therapies; and, (4) advocate for appropriate long-term follow-up for children and young adults after treatment for cancer. Dr. Gabrielle Calaminus is the president of SIOP. SIOP is governed by a board of directors and has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. www.siop.nl

About the International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organizations (ICCCPO)

ICCCPO is the largest organization of its kind representing families of children with cancer. ICCCPPO wants to see a world where the issues faced by children with cancer and their families, both in the short and long-term, are understood by families, healthcare professionals and the wider community to ensure that children receive the best possible care wherever they are in the world at the time of diagnosis and beyond. ICCCPPO's mission is to share information and experiences in order to improve access to the best possible treatment & care for children with cancer everywhere in the world. www.icccpo.org

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