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Subject: International Organizations, Drug Firms Convene at
VaccinationMeeting

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> WESTPORT, Mar 03 (Reuters Health) - President Clinton met yesterday at the
> White House with industry and international leaders, including the Global
> Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and the four largest
> pharmaceutical firms, in support of his Millennium Vaccine Initiative and
> universal childhood immunization.

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> "We agreed that the solution [to the problem of widespread disease] must
> include the development and the delivery of effective vaccines," President
> Clinton said at the meeting. "I have attempted to put a comprehensive
package

> on the table so the United States can do its part."

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> Announced in this year's State of the Union address, the president's
> Millennium Vaccine Initiative allocates \$50 million from the president's
> fiscal year 2001 budget to the vaccine purchase fund of GAVI. The
president

> has said that he will work to ensure that multilateral development banks,
> such as the World Bank, donate an additional \$400 million to \$900 million
> annually from their low-interest rate loans to healthcare services. He
will

> also work for increased funding of disease research, a tax credit on the

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- > sales of infectious disease vaccines and increased efforts to ensure a future
- > market for these vaccines.
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- > "The private sector is also responding to this challenge," President Clinton
- > noted. In what the White House called "unprecedented levels of corporate support", Merck and Co., of Whitehouse Station, New Jersey, pledged at the Washington meeting \$100 million worth of Recombivax HB, its hepatitis B vaccine, in the form of 1 million doses annually for 5 years.
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- > Further support came from the other pharmaceutical firms. American Home Products Corp. of Madison, New Jersey, committed 10 million doses of Haemophilus influenza type-B conjugate vaccine to GAVI. London-based SmithKline Beecham promised to expand malaria vaccine programs and begin vaccine trials in Africa, and it reaffirmed its pledge of \$1 billion to eradicate lymphatic filariasis. Aventis Pharma, headquartered in France, announced plans to donate 50 million doses of polio vaccine to Africa in support of the World Health Organization's and UNICEF's efforts to eliminate the disease.
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- > The public and private International AIDS Vaccine Initiative announced plans to raise the number of different AIDS vaccine candidates it is sponsoring to six, as well as to invest more than \$10 million to develop these vaccines.
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- > This international support follows the launching of a GAVI vaccination campaign, "The Children's Challenge," at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland last month. As reported by Reuters Health, the focus of the campaign is to obtain private and public support to make immunization available to every child worldwide.
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- > GAVI is a partnership established by various international collaborators, including the Bill and Melinda Gates Children's Vaccine Program, the Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations, and WHO. It reports that it has already received responses on immunization activities and needs from almost 50 developing nations.
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- > "The message here is that if the international community can find ways to make vaccines more affordable to low-income countries, the countries will meet us halfway by investing the necessary resources in people and systems that will get those vaccines to children," Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO director-general, said in a statement.