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STATEMENT BY THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL

Dr Robert Yeoh

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dementia brings devastation to people living with the illness, their families and care givers. We also know that incidence and prevalence of dementia increase exponentially with increasing age.

We are facing a public health and social care emergency. Every year, 4.6 million new cases of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are reported worldwide: one new case in every seven seconds. By 2050, it is projected that there will be over 100 million people living with dementia in the world. No country is adequately prepared to deal with a crisis of this magnitude. The dementia epidemic has arrived.

My name is Robert Yeoh and I come from Australia. On Behalf of Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI), representing 77 associations around the world, I urgently call upon all governments and stakeholders to act now.

Our member associations represent people living with dementia, their families, care givers, researchers, doctors, nurses, social workers and others. We want to promote early diagnosis, support, management and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias worldwide. We need support, from the World Health Organization, and from national governments. We believe that dementia is a major health issue. There is no time to lose!

This is important for several reasons. These include:

Economic: the cost of dementia to society is already enormous in developed nations. Researchers calculated the global cost of dementia at US\$315 billion annually. The huge increase in the number of people with dementia, especially in developing countries, will affect economies with increasing numbers of carers in need of support and a direct impact on the costs of health systems. Funds spent on dementia research are very limited, compared to other diseases.

Social: Dementia impacts on the lives of millions of families. In many nations in this Region dementia is regarded as an inevitable consequence of old age. In some countries there is denial. The consequences are often family disharmony, conflicts and break-ups.

Public Health reasons: There is now good evidence to support reduction of the risk of dementia through adopting healthy lifestyles. Dementia should be included in health promotion campaigns as it is linked to other diseases notably vascular disease.

Equity reasons: People living with dementia, just like anyone else, have the right to be cared for.

Many people do not have access to health care, especially in lower and middle-income countries.

Over the last 25 years, the Alzheimer's movement has built up a lot of knowledge and experience about what can be done to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia, families and care givers. We are very much aware that there is no one-size-fits-all for the whole world. Kyoto Declaration (of which you have received a copy) sets out strategies for tackling the epidemic that can be implemented according to a country's resources.

ADI is seeking the assistance of the World Health Organization to help to raise community awareness of dementia and to increase diagnosis, support, management and treatment for Alzheimer's disease and other dementias worldwide. Knowledge and information about the illness will certainly go a long way to improve the quality of life of people living with dementia their families and care givers.

We, at ADI, stand ready to contribute and work with WHO to meet the challenges of dementia epidemic. On 21 September 2008, World Alzheimer's Day, ADI released the Global Alzheimer's Disease Charter to provide a focus for international and national action.

ADI has decided the first step in this process should be to release a world report so that comprehensive information is available on dementia epidemic, the available treatments and the strategies available to richer and not so rich nations. ADI will take responsibility to put together this report. We aim to launch the report in 2009. We will be asking WHO to consider the report and in particular with a view to promoting awareness of the importance of dementia as a major health issue.

In conclusion the WHO has played a key role in demystifying as well as de-stigmatizing other chronic diseases and promoting awareness. We ask no more and no less on behalf of 30 million people living with dementia today and the tens of millions of families and care givers.

We congratulate WHO for the work done on dementia to date. Our collective duty now is to promote awareness that dementia is not an inevitable consequence of old age and that there is much that can be done through

1. Raising public awareness on dementia
2. Promotion of appropriate care and support to people living with dementia, their families and care givers
3. Promotion of lifestyles that may reduce the risks of dementia
4. Research into cause, cure and region/country specific appropriate models of dementia care.

Thank you.