



NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE ON 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2009

**WORLD HEART DAY – SUNDAY 27<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 09  
“WORK WITH HEART”**

**Leading world bodies call for healthier workplaces  
to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke**

*September 21, 2009* – In the lead up to World Heart Day on 27 September 2009, the World Heart Federation, the World Health Organization and the World Economic Forum have joined forces to call on governments, employers and workers around the world to make workplaces healthier. Over 17.2 million people worldwide die annually from heart disease and stroke – the world’s leading cause of death. Workplace wellness programmes that encourage healthy diets, physical activity and restrictions on tobacco use have been shown to be a cost-effective way to save lives and improve productivity.

“At a time when governments and business leaders are devoting considerable amounts of energy, and billions of dollars, to improve the health of global financial systems, attention should also be directed to the health of the workforce”, said Professor Pekka Puska, President of the World Heart Federation. Professor Puska will officially launch World Heart Day, in Abuja, Nigeria where he will join with community leaders and health professionals to discuss the prevention and control of heart disease, stroke and diabetes during a three-day all-Africa conference.

Dr Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization has previously highlighted the burden chronic diseases, such as heart disease and stroke, place on society “Chronic diseases, like heart disease, cancer, diabetes... long considered the companions of affluent societies, now impose their greatest burden on low- and middle-income countries. The need for long-term care strains health systems and budgets. The catastrophic costs of care drive households, in the millions, below the poverty line.”

Workplaces are an ideal setting to encourage healthy lifestyles. Most people spend over half their waking hours working. This year's call is to "Work with Heart". Small changes, such as bans on smoking, making more fruit and vegetables available at canteens, and encouraging workers to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine, can make a big difference in terms of better health. These measures help prevent not just heart disease and stroke but also other chronic diseases such as, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease, which together cause 60% of all deaths worldwide.

There are also substantial benefits for employers, including increased productivity, up to 20% fewer sick days, lower medical costs, improved morale and corporate image, and enhanced staff retention.

Through its members and partners, the World Heart Federation has gathered a number of case studies that showcase "best practices" from all over the world.

More information, along with leaflets, posters, and a promotional video, are available on the World Heart Federation website [www.worldheartday.org](http://www.worldheartday.org)

### **About the World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation is a nongovernmental organization committed to helping the global population achieve a longer and better life through prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. World Heart Federation membership is comprised of 198 medical societies and heart foundations in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit [www.worldheart.org](http://www.worldheart.org)