

Hon'ble Minister's Statement
Signing of MOU between RGOB and ACCF/Merck and Company
For the supply of HPV Vaccines

Time: 10.00 AM

Date: 21st August 2009

01. Global situation: According to WHO report 2006, 500,000 new cases reported per year and over 260,000 female death attributed to cervical cancer. The south east Asia contributes 50% of the global cases.

02. In Bhutan, cervical cancer is the second leading cancer after stomach cancer. We have been screening cervical cancer since 1999 through Pap Smear testing and accordingly we treat and prevent the disease. Pap smear testing facilities are now available in all hospitals and in critical BHUs. Under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Chhoden Wangchhuck, high level advocacy campaigns have significantly contributed to the prevention and early treatment of cervical cancer in the country.

03. It is said that the cervical cancer is the most painful disease of all the diseases. Many global agencies have been working on the development of HPV vaccines. Now there are two types of vaccines available, one of the them is Gaddasil produced by Merck and Company. Bhutan is happy to have the senior level representatives of the Merck and Company.

04. Through the initiatives of our Grand Queen Mother Ashi Kezang Chhoden Wangchhuck, MoH has been working with the Australian Cervical Cancer Foundation to provide HPV vaccines to our Bhutanese women. I am happy to inform you and the people of Bhutan that the ACCF and Merck and Company have generously agreed to provide vaccines worth USD 40 millions spread over five years free of cost. This will directly benefit our women population and greatly reduce the health care expenditure in the long run.

05. On this auspicious occasion, it is coincidental that we are signing the MOU amidst the gathering of our dedicated districts health workers who are here to attend a workshop.