



CONTACT:

Prof. Nikos Siafakas, ERS President

Tel. +32-2-238 53 60

Email: info@2010yearofthelung.org

HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE NEED HELP

European Launch of the Year of the Lung 2010 held in Marseille

**1 February, 2010
Marseille**

Hundreds of millions of people suffer every day from lung diseases, and they cause almost 20% of all deaths in the world. Increased awareness about lung diseases is vital, because they are killing more and more people every year and account for a socioeconomic burden of €102 billion due to health care costs and lost working days in Europe alone. The 'Big Five' lung disorders are lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia, tuberculosis (TB) and asthma.

Despite this evidence, public and political awareness of respiratory and lung diseases is very limited. Therefore, the European Respiratory Society (ERS) led by ERS President Prof. Nikos Siafakas, together with the leading Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) have declared **2010 Year of the Lung** in an effort to increase awareness of the importance of lung health. The launch of this campaign in Europe took place on the 30th January 2010 at the French-language Society of Pneumology (Société de Pneumologie de Langue Française, SPLF) conference in Marseille. Under the direction of the President Nikos Siafakas, the ERS is responsible for the European region activities during 2010 Year of the lung.

Speaking at the European Launch, Prof Nikos Siafakas emphasised that: ***"there is an urgent need for the European Commission and Member States to provide increased resources for research for improved patient care and quality of life"***. He also added that: ***"most respiratory diseases are both preventable and treatable – treatment however is very costly, and effective prevention policies in the EU and worldwide are severely lacking"***.

According to the latest WHO estimates (2007), 300 million people have asthma, which represents one of the most prevalent chronic conditions, and is unequivocally one of *the* most common chronic diseases of childhood in the developed world. During the Year of the Lung, support will be mobilized all around the world for **World Asthma Day on 4th May 2010**. Another lung disease, COPD, also affects the ability to breathe. 210 million people suffer from COPD. It is a complex, progressive (gets worse over time), debilitating and life-threatening disease. The WHO predicts that it will be the third leading cause of death by 2020.

Infectious pneumonia is the world's number one killer of infants and children below 5 years, accounting for more childhood deaths than malaria, AIDS, and measles combined. **World Pneumonia Day held on 2nd November 2010** will be strengthened during the Year of the Lung to increase awareness and mobilise support against the world's leading infectious killer of young children. In 2007 there was an estimated 9.27 million cases of TB according to a recent report of the WHO. Tuberculosis is also the number one cause of death among people infected with HIV. The current economic crisis is also expected to have an impact on TB. The 22 countries with the highest burden of the disease — nearly 80% of the cases — are also among the world's poorest.

Of all global deaths from cancers, lung cancer remains, by far, the largest cause of death from all cancers. It is the leading cause of cancer and is likely to increase faster than many other types because of the accompanying upsurge of smoking, particularly in low and middle income countries.

A key initiative will be the launch of the first ever **World Spirometry Day on 14th October 2010**, a global event providing public lung testing in hospitals and clinics across the world.

Notes to the Editors

About the 2010 Year of the Lung

The overall goal of the Year of the Lung is to raise awareness about lung health among the public, initiate action in communities worldwide, and advocate for resources to combat lung disease including increased investment in basic, clinical and translational research worldwide

More information on European *Year of the Lung* activities, see: <http://www.ersnet.org/yearofthelung>

More information on worldwide *Year of the Lung* activities, see: www.2010yearofthelung.org

About FIRS

The Year of the Lung is being organised by the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS). FIRS includes the [Asociacion Latinoamericana del Thorax](#) (ALAT), the [American College of Chest Physicians](#) (ACCP), the [American Thoracic Society](#) (ATS), the [Asia Pacific Society of Respirology](#) (APSR), the [European Respiratory Society](#) (ERS), the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease](#) (The Union), and the [Pan African Thoracic Society](#) (PATS).

About ERS

The European Respiratory Society, ERS, is an international and medical organisation with more than 9000 members in over 100 countries representing medical and scientific experts in the field of respiratory science and medicine. Its mission is to promote lung health through research, knowledge sharing, medical and public education. More info at: www.ersnet.org