PRESS STATEMENT

Scientific excellence award given to a woman for the first time in recognition of her leadership in the field of avian influenza

12 May 2014, BARCELONA: For the first time the annual Excellence Award from the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) which recognizes outstanding contributions in the fields of clinical microbiology and infectious diseases is being given to a woman, Dr Ilaria Capua, for her crucial work on influenza. Dr Capua is being honoured for her work that generated a paradigm shift through the promotion of greater transparency and interdisciplinary collaboration in the field of influenza research. In 2006 she provided international leadership by means of a worldwide call to deposit influenza virus sequences in publicly accessible databases, following her example of releasing the sequence of the first H5N1 African isolate in GenBank. Greater transparency, interdisciplinary collaboration and sharing of viral strains are now recommended by major international organisations such as OIE, FAO and WHO as an essential step to improve prepandemic preparedness efforts.

“Dr Capua has shown exceptional leadership in the field of virology. She has been a strong advocate for the "One Health Vision" as a fundamental means of improving global health, strengthening global security, fostering disease surveillance networks, and enforcing stricter and better-coordinated international health regulations," said Professor Giuseppe Cornaglia, Chair of the ESCMID Award Committee who will present the award during the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) taking place in Barcelona, 10-13 May 2014.

Accepting the award Dr Capua said: “I am honoured to receive this prestigious award. Such an acknowledgement reinforces the role of women in science and highlights the importance of making data and information available for researchers worldwide to support the advancement of research and educated decision making at the science/policy interface.”

Dr Capua is currently a Member of the Italian Parliament, on temporary leave of absence as Director of the Division of Comparative Biomedical Sciences at the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie, Italy, which hosts the FAO and OIE Reference Laboratories for avian influenza and Newcastle disease, the FAO Reference Center for Rabies as well as the OIE Collaborating Center for Diseases at the Human-Animal Interface. Her group of 70 staff provides diagnostic expertise globally, and conducts cutting-edge research on influenza viruses and viral zoonoses.

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ESCMID is a non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infectious diseases in Europe and beyond. The Society promotes and supports research, education and training and shares good medical practice in the infection disciplines to build capacity throughout Europe. www.escmid.org