



# FIGO

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF GYNECOLOGY & OBSTETRICS

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The Secretary of the 17th Expert Committee on the Selection and Use of Essential Medicines

Medicine Access and Rational Use (MAR)

Department of Essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies (EMP)

World Health Organization

20 Avenue Appia

CH-1211 Geneva 27

Switzerland

17<sup>th</sup> November 2008

Dear Sir/Madam

***Proposed Addition of Misoprostol to the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines***

As you are probably already aware, the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics ("FIGO") is the only organisation representing professional bodies of obstetricians and gynaecologists globally. We currently have member societies in 113 countries/territories around the world.

We are writing this letter in support of the proposal that misoprostol be added to the *WHO Model List of Essential Medicines* for the indication of treatment of incomplete abortion and miscarriage, as well as prevention of post partum haemorrhage. We request that the Expert Committee give serious consideration to this proposal.

In December 2007, FIGO's highly regarded monthly peer-reviewed journal – the "*International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics*" published a Supplement (Volume 99 (Supplement 2) entitled "*Misoprostol for Reproductive Health: Dosage Recommendations*" for which I personally wrote an editorial in my capacity as FIGO President.

I am enclosing a copy of the Supplement, which I would urge you to share with your fellow Committee members. As you may see from the Editorial that I wrote, given the contribution of postpartum haemorrhage and treatment of incomplete abortion to maternal mortality and morbidity on a global scale, it is our view that the appropriate use of misoprostol is of critical importance and will go a long way to addressing barriers to access that currently exist.

A wealth of scientific evidence, which includes numerous randomised and comparative clinical trials and several clinical guidelines, supports the view that misoprostol should be included in the *WHO Model List of Essential Medicines* for this indication. Misoprostol is already included in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> editions of the *WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (22.1 Oxytocic)* because of its proven safety and efficacy for medical abortion and labour induction.

Misoprostol's wide availability, low-cost, stability at room temperature and ease of use for both patient and clinician make it an ideal treatment in low-resource settings. At present, some Ministries of Health are unable to provide misoprostol for incomplete abortion via standard drug registries because the product is not listed on the *Model List of Essential Medicines* for this particularly important women's health indication. Similarly, UN agencies and agencies in emergency situations often cannot offer misoprostol because of its absence on the list. Listing misoprostol for incomplete abortion will break down one of the major barriers to use of this drug and facilitate access to safe and effective post-abortion care in many settings throughout the world.

We therefore strongly urge the Expert Committee to add misoprostol to the *WHO Model List of Essential Medicines* for the indication of incomplete abortion and miscarriage.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Shaw', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dorothy Shaw  
President – FIGO