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International Pediatric Association Endorsement The New WHO Growth Standards for Infants and Young Children

April 20, 2006

The International Pediatric Association (IPA) welcomes and endorses the long-awaited WHO Child Growth Standards which are to be released on April 27, 2006. These growth standards are based on a careful long-term study of infants and children from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and North America who were fed according to accepted international nutritional standards (including breast feeding), and whose mothers were adequately nourished and avoided known adverse factors such as tobacco exposure. The new growth standards are referable to all children everywhere, clearly show that all children in the world can and should grow equally well, and also demonstrate that in today's world adequate nutrition, environment, and health are stronger determinants of growth than are gender or ethnicity. The standards provide an effective tool for detecting both undernutrition and obesity, thus addressing the double burden of malnutrition affecting populations on a global basis.

These growth standards present a new and invaluable tool for addressing the health and nutrition needs of children throughout the world. They will help pediatricians, family physicians, nurses, healthcare workers, and parents to monitor the growth of children and recognize growth problems which might require attention to the child's health or nutrition. They establish guidelines for the healthy growth and development of all infants and young children in all countries. They also provide support for good general child health care practices such as immunization, sound nutrition (starting with predominant, ideally exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life), and adequate pre- and post-natal care for mothers (including good nutrition and avoidance of tobacco).

“The WHO Child Growth Standards are a major new tool for providing the best health care and nutrition to all the world's children,” said Dr. Adenike Grange, President of the IPA. Dr. Jane Schaller, Executive Director of the IPA added, “We encourage all of our IPA Member Pediatric Associations and Societies from countries and regions throughout the world to adopt and use these standards in the best interests of all children, and to advocate that these standards be adopted by their governments.”

The IPA will promote the new growth standards to its National and Regional Specialty Member Pediatric Associations and Societies throughout the

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world; will offer educational sessions on the standards and their implementation at country and regional levels; will lobby for their inclusion in pediatric, medical school, and other health care curricula and training modules; and will promote advocacy for their adoption by government Ministries of Health.

The IPA includes the National Pediatric Societies of 141 countries of the world, eleven regional pediatric societies representing all regions of the world, a number of international pediatric specialty societies, the World Federation of Pediatric Surgeons, and the International Pediatric Chairs Association. IPA offices are located in Geneva, Vancouver, and Lagos.