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Press release

François DABIS appointed Director of ANRS

Prof. François Dabis has just been appointed Director of ANRS, an autonomous agency of Inserm, by the Ministers responsible for Research and Health, on the proposal of the Chairman and CEO of Inserm. A physician, academic and internationally renowned researcher, Prof. Dabis specialises in epidemiology and public health. He succeeds Prof. Jean-François Delfraissy, the new President of the National Consultative Ethics Committee.

Prof. François Dabis has just been appointed Director of the French National Agency for Research on AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (ANRS) by the Ministers responsible for Research and Health, on the proposal of the Chairman and CEO of Inserm. Prof. Dabis is 59 years of age. He obtained his Doctorate in Medicine at the University of Bordeaux II in 1983. During his scientific training, Prof. Dabis chose to specialise in epidemiology and public health, first in France, and then at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston. He spent two years at the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), in Atlanta, as an Officer of the Epidemic Intelligence Service, from 1984-1986. He obtained his Doctorate in Epidemiology in 1992, at the University of Bordeaux II. From 2001 to 2015, he led the "HIV, Cancer and Global Health" research team at Inserm Centre U 897, at the Institute of Public Health (ISPED) of the University of Bordeaux. He is currently a member of the team "Infectious Diseases in Resource-Limited Countries" of University of Bordeaux/Inserm Research Centre U1219, "Bordeaux Population Health."

Prof. Dabis is an expert on HIV, internationally recognised for his extensive work on the epidemiology and public health challenges associated with this viral infection. Throughout his teaching and research career, he has focused on evaluating strategies for both prevention of HIV transmission and patient care.

In France, he has established large cohorts of patients infected with HIV: the ANRS CO 03 cohort, which has been followed for the last 30 years, or the cohort of patients co-infected with HCV and HIV (ANRS CO13 HEPAVIH), followed for the last 12 years. However, most of his work involves Africa. He was joint supervisor of the pivotal trial ANRS 049 DITRAME, which in 1999 provided evidence for the efficacy of a short AZT treatment in reducing HIV transmission from mother to child in West Africa. Today, his research approach is aimed at achieving the "90-90-90" goals set by UNAIDS for controlling the epidemic all over the world: by 2020, 90% of people living with HIV will be diagnosed, 90% of people diagnosed will be receiving antiretroviral treatment, and 90% of people undergoing treatment will have their viral load under long-term control. With his South African colleagues, Prof. Dabis has thus sought to evaluate over the last five years, in a region badly affected by HIV, the efficacy of an original approach combining a repeated offer of home-based screening with rapid medical care for all people infected. The objective of this study was thus to reduce HIV transmission within the population of this region. The first results of the ANRS

12249 TASP (Treatment as Prevention) trial were made public at the last International AIDS Conference, in July 2016. These results, eagerly awaited by the international community, revealed the difficulty of putting such an approach in place in the field, and were inconclusive with respect to reducing the risk of HIV transmission in the population in the short term.

François Dabis chaired ANRS Coordinated Action 12, responsible for the Agency's scientific programme in countries with limited resources, from 2002 to 2015. He has been a very regular member of WHO and UNAIDS expert committees tasked with drawing up international directives on HIV. For the last ten years he has been principal investigator of International Epidemiology Databases to Evaluate AIDS (IeDEA) West Africa, an international consortium that pools databases on the care of people living with HIV in these countries, and is funded by the US National Institutes of Health. In 2015-2016, following the Ebola epidemic and at the request of the French authorities, he coordinated the establishment of the RIPOST programme, an initiative to strengthen the ability of the national public health institutes in West Africa to respond to epidemic threats.

François Dabis chaired the scientific council of InVS (now *Santé Publique France*) from 2003 to 2012, and was a member of the French High Council for Public Health (HCSP) from 2011 to 2016. He is a *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur* (Knight of the Legion of Honour).

For the new Director of ANRS, *"There are still many challenges for both basic and translational research today: fighting structural and individual obstacles to prevention, screening and treatment of HIV and hepatitis in France and in the Agency's partner countries, developing a vaccine, eradicating HIV and HBV..."* He adds, *"I know ANRS well, and can testify to the vigour that this agency instils, and its ability to adapt to new challenges and support researchers in their projects."* He concludes that ANRS must maintain its commitment to achieving the health-related sustainable development goals, by expanding its areas of intervention. *"It seems essential to me that our partnership with countries that have limited resources, and the know-how we have developed together for many years in the area of HIV, and more recently hepatitis, should be applied to other key health problems, especially those that are infection-related."*

Yves Lévy, Chairman and CEO of Inserm, is delighted at the appointment of Mr Dabis, and wishes to *"salute the work accomplished by Jean-François Delfraissy at the head of ANRS, which helped to support French and international research teams working successfully in the area of HIV and hepatitis, with strong international visibility."*

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