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Laurier appoints humanitarian expert Dr. James Orbinski to CIGI Chair in Global Health

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has appointed distinguished humanitarian and medical doctor James Orbinski to the position of CIGI Chair in Global Health, starting Sept. 1, 2012.

Dr. Orbinski is a former international president of *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders) who has front-line experience in complex humanitarian emergencies, from Rwanda to Somalia, Zaire and Afghanistan. As head of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the organization in 1999.

"It is a great honour and privilege to welcome James Orbinski to Wilfrid Laurier University," said Deborah MacLatchy, Laurier's vice-president: academic and provost. "His tremendous passion, knowledge and wealth of experience will greatly benefit our students and build on Laurier's established expertise in international policy and governance."

In his new role, Dr. Orbinski will be affiliated with Laurier's School of International Policy and Governance, the Health Sciences Program in the Faculty of Science, and the Balsillie School of International Affairs. The latter is a highly regarded partnership involving Laurier, The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), and the University of Waterloo. In addition, Dr. Orbinski will serve as director of the Africa Initiative at CIGI and as senior advisor to CIGI's vice-president of programs.

"Laurier has a wealth of expertise, great faculty and wonderful students. I am thrilled to be joining this outstanding Canadian university, where I will work with others to develop a teaching, research and policy agenda around global warming and global health," said Dr. Orbinski.

Most recently, Dr. Orbinski was a professor at the University of Toronto Medical School where he served as chair of Global Health at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health. He was also a fellow at the Munk Centre for International Studies and practiced medicine at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto. Among his many achievements, Dr. Orbinski is co-founder and board chair of Dignitas International, a non-governmental organization that performs health systems research and community-based care for people living with HIV in the developing world. This year, Dignitas is expanding research and scaling services for a population of three million in Malawi.

He is also a founding board member of the Global Alliance for TB Drug Development, the Stephen Lewis Foundation, and Canadian Doctors for Medicare.

Dr. Orbinski earned an undergraduate degree at Trent University before studying medicine at McMaster University. He later completed a master's degree in international relations at the University of Toronto.

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Dr. Orbinski was head of mission for *Médecins Sans Frontières* in Kigali during the Rwandan genocide of 1994. He served as medical co-ordinator in Jalalabad, Afghanistan in the winter of 1994; as head of mission in Goma, Zaire in 1996-97 during the refugee crisis; and as medical co-ordinator in Baidoa, Somalia during the civil war and famine of 1992-93. He was international president of *Médecins Sans Frontières* from 1998-2001.

As head of the organization, Dr. Orbinski represented *Médecins Sans Frontières* on critical humanitarian issues in the Sudan, Kosovo, Russia, Cambodia, South Africa, India and Thailand, among others. He also represented the organization at the UN Security Council, in many national parliaments, and at the World Health Organization and the UN Refugee Agency. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to *Médecins Sans Frontières* in 1999 in recognition of the organization's pioneering humanitarian work over several decades.

Dr. Orbinski also chaired MSF's Neglected Diseases Working Group, which created and launched the Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi). The DNDi is a global not-for-profit research consortia focused on developing treatments for tropical diseases of the developing world that are largely neglected by profit-driven research and development companies. Since its inception in 2003, the DNDi has engaged significant international advocacy for neglected tropical diseases (including for a Global Framework Convention on Research and Development). It has also developed and disseminated new treatments for Malaria, African Sleeping Sickness, and several other neglected tropical diseases. These new drugs are now available to millions of people. DNDi also has a development portfolio of 17 lead compounds targeting neglected diseases, including children's formulations of Anti-Retro-Virals for the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Orbinski has written a best-selling book, *An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarianism in the 21st Century*, and is the subject of an award-winning documentary film, *Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma*.

He was awarded the Meritorious Service Cross, Canada's highest civilian award, for his work assisting the injured and bearing witness to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Order of Ontario.