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Foreword

The UNDP/WORLD BANK/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) is a goal-oriented research and training programme with two interdependent objectives:

- research and development to obtain new and to improve existing tools for the control of major tropical diseases;
- strengthening of the research capability of tropical countries.

The research is conducted on a global basis by multidisciplinary Scientific Working Groups. The training and institution-strengthening activities are limited to the tropical countries where the diseases of concern are endemic.

Six groups of diseases have initially been selected for attack: malaria, schistosomiasis, the filariases (including onchocerciasis), the trypanosomiases (both African sleeping sickness and the American form, Chagas' disease), the leishmaniases and leprosy. Scientific Working Groups are also active in "trans-disease" areas: biological control of vectors, epidemiology, and social and economic research.

The present supplement contains the proceedings of a meeting of the TDR Scientific Working Group on schistosomiasis on «Prospects for immunological intervention in human schistosomiasis» held in Geneva in May 1986.

Scientists interested in participating in TDR are invited to write for further information to: Communications Officer, Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

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Introduction

Observations of the ingenious mechanisms by which adult schistosomes evade the immunological defence of the host began intensively about 20 years ago. Sophisticated approaches, such as those based on monoclonal antibodies and recombinant DNA techniques, have allowed researchers to begin unravelling the complex nature of immunity against different stages of this trematode. Several effector mechanisms, involving an array of effector cells, have been identified. In addition, the presence of blocking antibodies in the early phase of infection seems to upset the mechanisms that might otherwise be expected to lead to naturally acquired immunity. Research using animal models, such as the mouse and rat, has increased knowledge considerably but investigation of the immunology of primate schistosomiasis will have to be substantially expanded. Although the present proceedings provide ample evidence that an impressive body of information has been gathered, the goal has yet to be achieved. The fortuitous fact that schistosomes do not multiply in the host means that mor-