New data on the global economic impact and burden of preventable blindness and vision impairment highlighted for World Sight Day

- Annual economic impact equals more than 350,000 healthy life years lost and over €20 billion EUR as a result of blindness for 14 countries studied

- Screening for diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and AMD alone can offset economic costs by more than €6 billion EUR each year

- Low vision and blindness affect more than 285 million people globally,¹ but more than 90% of vision impairment can be prevented, treated or cured¹

- Novartis’s eye care division Alcon helps to educate patients with materials on taking care of their eyes at every age of their lives

Basel, October 9, 2014 – To highlight the critical need for access to eye care and regular eye examinations, Novartis and its eye care division, Alcon, are introducing new data on World Sight Day, highlighting the economic impact and burden that blindness and vision impairment can have on societies and individuals across the globe. World Sight Day, held on October 9th, is a global initiative to help raise awareness and address the problem of preventable blindness and vision impairment worldwide.

Conducted by Novartis, The European Forum Against Blindness (EFAB) and Deloitte Access Economics, “The Cost and Burden of Eye Diseases and Preventable Blindness” study quantified the economic impact of vision loss by analyzing the top four eye diseases responsible for vision loss: glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, cataracts, and wet age-related macular degeneration (AMD), which, in the EU alone, affects one in 10 people. The study also analyzed the cost-effectiveness of interventions to prevent them. A total of 14 countries were included in the study: Australia, Argentina, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.

Burden and Impact of Preventable Blindness

Eyes need to be regularly examined, as many eye diseases show no early symptoms or are slow to progress and, are often only detected after vision has been altered or lost. Due to these factors, blindness and vision impairment can be a considerable burden to individuals, families and societies, imposing severe physical, financial and quality-of-life limitations.

The analysis found that within the 14 countries studied, more than 350,000 healthy life years are lost due to cataracts, glaucoma, AMD and diabetic retinopathy, equaling more than 123 million workdays lost per year. In addition, the annual economic costs due to preventable vision impairment and blindness totaled more than €20 billion EUR.

Vision Impairment and Blindness Can Be Avoided

Investing in cost-effective interventions has a big impact on reducing the disease burden. Globally, more than 285 million people live with vision impairment and blindness.¹ But,
more than 90% of vision problems can be prevented, treated or cured, provided patients have access to treatment.\(^1\)

The analysis found that access to eye care, and early diagnosis and treatment for these eye conditions can have an enormous impact on reducing the disease burden and offset a significant amount of economic cost to society. For instance, screening for diabetic retinopathy, cataracts and AMD alone can offset economic costs by more than €6 billion EUR each year. To learn more about the economic costs and burden of preventable blindness and how it differs across the globe, visit [www.globalcostofblindness.com](http://www.globalcostofblindness.com).

**Taking Care of Your Eyes at Every Age**
A person’s eye health is constantly changing as they age, with new needs and challenges at different times in life. Eyes at age three are much different than eyes at age 30 or 60. The eyes are also a good indicator of overall health. A range of illness can be detected through an eye examination, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and even rare hereditary diseases.\(^2\)

This year on World Sight Day, Alcon is helping people around the world learn about their eye health at every age by providing in-depth, downloadable digital materials intended to help encourage conversations about how to properly maintain eye health and visual function. These materials cover eye diseases and conditions starting at birth to age 60 and older. To learn more about the eyes at every age and the various eye conditions that can affect them, visit [www.alcon.com/worldsightday](http://www.alcon.com/worldsightday).

**Disclaimer**
This press release contains expressed or implied forward-looking statements, including statements that can be identified by terminology such as “can,” “expects,” or similar expressions. Such forward-looking statements reflect the current views of the Group regarding future events, and involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors that may cause actual results to be materially different from any future results expressed or implied by such statements. These expectations could be affected by, among other things, risks and factors referred to in the Risk Factors section of Novartis AG's current Form 20-F on file with the US Securities and Exchange Commission. Novartis is providing the information in this press release as of this date and does not undertake any obligation to update it in the future.

**About Alcon**
Alcon, the global leader in eye care, provides innovative products that enhance quality of life by helping people worldwide see better. The three Alcon businesses - Surgical, Ophthalmic Pharmaceuticals and Vision Care - offer the widest spectrum of eye care products in the world. Alcon is the second largest division of the Novartis Group, with pro-forma sales of USD 10.5 billion in 2013. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, USA, Alcon has more than 25,000 employees worldwide, operations in 75 countries and products available in 180 markets. For more information, visit [www.alcon.com](http://www.alcon.com).

**About Novartis**
Novartis provides innovative healthcare solutions that address the evolving needs of patients and societies. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis offers a diversified portfolio to best meet these needs: innovative medicines, eye care, cost-saving generic pharmaceuticals, preventive vaccines and diagnostic tools, over-the-counter and animal health products. Novartis is the only global company with leading positions in these areas. In 2013, the Group achieved net sales of USD 57.9 billion, while R&D throughout the Group amounted to approximately USD 9.9 billion (USD 9.6 billion excluding impairment and amortization charges). Novartis Group companies employ approximately 135,000 full-time-equivalent associates and sell products in more than 150 countries around the world. For more information, please visit [http://www.novartis.com](http://www.novartis.com).

Novartis is on Twitter. Sign up to follow @Novartis at [http://twitter.com/novartis](http://twitter.com/novartis).
References


Novartis Media Relations

Central media line: +41 61 324 2200
Eric Althoff
Novartis Global Media Relations
+41 61 324 7999 (direct)
+41 79 593 4202 (mobile)
eric.althoff@novartis.com

Sandra Waite
Novartis Pharma Communications
+41 61 324 0589 (direct)
+41 79 912 7024 (mobile)
sandra.waite@novartis.com

Elizabeth Harness Murphy
Alcon Global Communications
+1 817 551 8696 (direct)
+1 585 435 7379 (mobile)
elizabeth.murphy@alcon.com

E-mail: media.relations@novartis.com

For Novartis multimedia content, please visit www.thenewsmarket.com/Novartis
For questions about the site or required registration, please contact: journalisthelp@thenewsmarket.com.

Novartis Investor Relations

Central phone: +41 61 324 7944
Samir Shah +41 61 324 7944
Pierre-Michel Bringer +41 61 324 1065
Thomas Hungerbuehler +41 61 324 8425
Isabella Zinck +41 61 324 7188
North America:
Stephen Rubino +1 862 778 8301
Susan Donofrio +1 862 778 9257

E-mail: investor.relations@novartis.com