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Helsinn announces the official opening of its new R&D Centre of Excellence in Dublin

Lugano (ots) -

The Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D. today performed the official opening of the centre which will play a significant role in Helsinn group's pipeline of new products.

The Swiss pharmaceutical group Helsinn announced the official opening, performed today by the Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Lenihan T.D, of its new R&D Centre of Excellence in Mulhuddart, Co. Dublin. The centre, which will play a significant role in Helsinn Group's pipeline of new products including the NK-1 inhibitor Netupitant for the treatment of emesis due to chemotherapy, and the novel ghrelin analogue Anamorelin for the treatment of cachexia, involved an investment of Euro 13 million, supported by the Irish Government through IDA Ireland. The investment is expected to create up to 10 high-value research positions over the next few years.

Helsinn announced its plans to establish the facility in April 2009, and following a successful construction phase the plant is now ready to commence operations. The centre will be responsible for Research & Development for Oral Solid Dosage (OSD) at the company's Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals facility at Mulhuddart, Dublin, which currently produces a range of drug products.

The investment is part of Helsinn's strategic decision to strengthen its in-house development capability enabling better control of cost and time in bringing new therapies to patients worldwide.

During the official opening Mr. Riccardo Braglia, Chief Executive Officer of the Helsinn Group said, "Helsinn is pleased to confirm the completion of this investment in our R&D Centre on time and in budget which will be of significant benefit for the future of our international business, by centralising the development and commercialisation of Oral Solid Dosage products for better management of our resources and flexibility to better serve our partners worldwide".

Helsinn's Irish operation was established in 1990, when it acquired Birex Pharmaceuticals in Dublin. To-date Helsinn has invested a total of over Euro 60 million in Ireland and continuously invests in its plants in order to maintain high quality and safety, to increase overall production capacity and to offer its partners up-to-date products, technologies and services. It now employs a total of 145 people at its Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals facility from which it supplies global markets with a range of products including its highly successful product Palonosetron which is effective for treatment of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, as well as Nimesulide (anti-inflammatory) and Klean-Prep® (pre-colonoscopy treatment).

The Minister for Finance, Mr. Brian Lenihan said, "I am delighted to officially open Helsinn's Centre of Excellence in Dublin today. This investment is highly significant for Ireland as it places Helsinn's Irish operation at the centre of Helsinn Group's worldwide R&D operations. The Irish Centre of Knowledge and Learning for OSD products will play a pivotal role in facilitating the growth of

Helsinn's worldwide business by acting as a launch site for new products within its portfolio. This investment is a further endorsement of Ireland as a prime location for highly innovative companies carrying out key strategic activities".

About the Helsinn Group

Helsinn is a privately owned pharmaceutical group with headquarters in Lugano, Switzerland and subsidiaries in Ireland and USA. Helsinn's unique business model is focused on the licensing of pharmaceuticals and medical devices in therapeutic niche areas. The Group in-licenses early to late stage new chemical entities, completes their development from the performance of pre-clinical/clinical studies and Chemistry, Manufacturing and Control (CMC) development, to the filing for and attainment of their market approval worldwide.

Helsinn's products are sold directly, through the Group subsidiaries, or alternatively out-licensed to its network of local marketing and commercial partners, selected for their deep in-market knowledge and know-how, and assisted and supported with a full range of product and scientific management services, including commercial, regulatory, financial, legal and medical marketing advice. The active pharmaceutical ingredients and the finished dosage forms are manufactured at Helsinn's cGMP facilities in Switzerland and Ireland, and supplied worldwide to its customers.

Helsinn is the worldwide licensor of palonosetron, a second generation 5-HT₃ receptor antagonist, for the prevention of chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV) in patients with cancer and of post-operative nausea and vomiting (PONV), and of the original nimesulide, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) distributed in more than 50 countries worldwide. Helsinn, with a workforce of around 450 employees in Switzerland, Ireland and USA, reported a 2009 turnover of over CHF 305.0 million (about EUR 232.0 million at the current conversion exchange rate), covering 85 countries worldwide, with over 20% of this turnover invested in R&D.

For more information on the Helsinn Group please visit the website: www.helsinn.com

About Helsinn in Ireland

Helsinn has operated in Ireland since 1990 and its Irish manufacturing facilities are EU certified for manufacture of pharmaceutical products and were successfully inspected by the US Food and Drug Administration earlier this year. The company manufactures and packages the group's products in compliance with EU, US FDA and all major international health and environmental requirements, thus guaranteeing Helsinn's clients the highest possible assurance of quality and reliability.

Contact:

Helsinn Birex Pharmaceuticals Ltd.
Padraig Somers, General Manager
Tel.: +353/1-822-5404
E-Mail: info-HBP@helsinn.com

