Global Leader Health Level Seven Hosts Pioneering Cross-Continent Dialogue on Standards and Interoperability in Africa
Ugandan ICT Experts Dialogue with HL7 Leaders

Orlando, FL., U.S. – January 13, 2009 - Health Level Seven (HL7), a preeminent healthcare IT standards development organization with diverse member representation from around the world is assuming a growing role in global standards and interoperability consensus. In this spirit, the organization announced today that it is hosting a high-level delegation of five Ugandan information and communications technology experts (ICT) at its 2009 kick-off Working Group Meeting in Orlando, Florida, January 11-16, 2009. This effort is a critical first step to increased interoperability information-sharing efforts between HL7 and ICT reform drivers in both Africa and Asia. The Ugandan contingent is led by Eddie Mukooyo, MD, head of the country’s Ministry of Health. Uganda has served as an ICT leader since the 2003 enactment of the ICT4D National Policy which pledges the government’s support for development of sustainable ICT initiatives that provide quantifiable results for the benefit of all Ugandans. Dr. Mukooyo explained the significance of the HL7 event and its potential impact on Ugandan health ICT initiatives.

“Uganda is a trailblazer in efforts to use ICT for national transformation and the improvement of the public’s health. The conversations occurring with HL7 leadership present at the Orlando Working Group meeting are invaluable to our country as we contemplate revolutionary deployment of technology to connect medical personnel and to aid in the transfer of health and drug information across the healthcare system. HL7’s event enables us to share Uganda’s health ICT story including lessons learned, while getting vital details about the most current standards and interoperability developments worldwide. This knowledge transfer is absolutely critical in building a successful, interoperable health ICT system that works effectively both inside and outside Uganda’s borders.” Mukooyo adds,
"The HL7 meeting also affords Ugandans the valuable opportunity to be active participants at the standards development table and have our voice be heard.”

The shortage of educational resources and lack of direct involvement in healthcare standards development by Global South or developing world leaders was identified as a notable impediment to ICT progress by participants in the 2008 Bellagio *Path to Interoperability Conference* which was convened by HL7, the World Health Organization and the Rockefeller Foundation. HL7 Chief Executive Officer Charles Jaffe, MD, PhD, observed that, “HL7 - as a direct result of lessons learned at the *Path to Interoperability Conference* - is now providing on-going support for more hands-on participation by Global South decision-makers from Africa and Asia in standards and interoperability discussions. HL7 also continues to explore cost-effective avenues for distributing standards specifications, implementation guides, educational resources and distance learning modules to those most in need and least able to pay.” Jaffe emphasized that these activities support HL7’s aim to act as the global resource for healthcare information interoperability and standards harmonization.

As profound health system challenges persist, national and cross-border healthcare ICT panacea initiatives multiply and move forward on every continent. African nations, in particular, are urgently searching for workable ICT solutions in light of medical personnel shortages of more than 1.7 million care providers, an average life expectancy of only 47 years and more than three million of its citizens perishing annually from HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Efforts in Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and other African nations are providing sparks of hope and eHealth innovation. For example, electronic health records employed in the harshest environments of Kenya are changing the face of HIV/AIDS treatment and software specially adapted by locally trained experts is enabling E-learning and workforce extension tools to meet specific needs. However, one of the key persistent challenges is the absence of interoperable health systems and consensus on data standards.

W. Ed Hammond, PhD, chair of the HL7 Board and Joint Initiative Council of international standards development organizations said, “There is a clear global ICT imperative now to examine the needs of key stakeholders such as patients, providers, healthcare facilities, ministries of health, districts, technology vendors, donors, and development agencies, to define and understand interoperability obstacles and to articulate what technologies, policies, skills, and leadership are necessary to achieve true
interoperability. HL7 will spearhead this movement, shaping and informing international efforts.”

For more information
For more information about HL7, please visit www.HL7.org.

About HL7
Founded in 1987, Health Level Seven, Inc. (www.HL7.org) is a not-for-profit, ANSI-accredited standards development organization dedicated to providing a comprehensive framework and related standards for the exchange, integration, sharing, and retrieval of electronic health information that supports clinical practice and the management, delivery and evaluation of health services. HL7’s more than 2,300 members represent approximately 500 corporate members, which include more than 90 percent of the information systems vendors serving healthcare.

HL7’s endeavors are sponsored, in part, by the support of its benefactors: Accenture; Booz Allen Hamilton; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Duke Translational Medicine Institute (DTMI); Eclipsys Corporation; Eli Lilly & Company; Epic Systems Corporation; the Food and Drug Administration; GE Healthcare Information Technologies; GlaxoSmithKline; IBM; Intel Corporation; InterSystems Corporation; Kaiser Permanente; Lockheed Martin; McKesson Provider Technologies; Microsoft Corporation; NHS Connecting for Health; NICTIZ National Healthcare; Novartis; Oracle Corporation; Partners HealthCare System, Inc.; Pfizer, Inc.; Philips Healthcare; QuadraMed Corporation; Quest Diagnostics Inc.; Sanofi-aventis R&D; Siemens Healthcare; St. Jude Medical; Sunquest Information Systems; Thomson Reuters; the U.S. Department of Defense, Military Health System; and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Numerous HL7 Affiliates have been established around the globe including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uruguay.