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**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

**Secretary Tommy Thompson and Senator Tom Daschle to Co-Chair  
Children's HeartLink International Advisory Board**

*Board Will Focus on Strategic Growth and Resource Development of Children's  
HeartLink's Pediatric Cardiac Programs*

**MINNEAPOLIS (May 26, 2011)** – Children's HeartLink announced today its international advisory board that will provide expertise and consultation in strategic planning, capacity building, international relations, and medical diplomacy. The inaugural meeting occurs today in Washington, D.C. where former Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson and former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle will lead the discussion with experts in health care, public affairs, and international development.

"I've been a supporter of Children's HeartLink for many years," said Sec. Thompson. "Their work to strengthen cardiac care for children in medically underserved areas of the world is an example of the type of medical diplomacy I have long advocated—when we support medical professionals, families and children in other countries, we begin to break down cultural barriers and build long-lasting relationships. I look forward to chairing this advisory group with Senator Daschle and to advising Children's HeartLink as they plan for their next phase of organizational growth and development."

"Cardiovascular disease is a significant global health concern, for children as well as adults," said Sen. Daschle. "Children's HeartLink has a unique ability to bring together medical volunteers from the top pediatric cardiac programs, such as Children's Hospital Boston, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minneapolis, Mayo Clinic, Stanford University's Lucile Packard Children's Hospital and University of Minnesota Amplatz Children's Hospital, with promising hospitals in developing countries, creating valuable mentoring and training opportunities. Children's HeartLink, Sec. Thompson and I have assembled a diverse group of advisors who can help Children's HeartLink staff navigate the global development landscape and develop country-specific approaches for their work."

"I'm delighted this incredible group of people has come together to support Children's HeartLink in our effort to strengthen the capacity of pediatric cardiac programs in developing countries," said Elizabeth Perlich Sweeney, president of Children's HeartLink. "One in every 120 children is born with a heart defect, but in many parts of the world, there is a severe shortage of doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals

with the training necessary to provide adequate care. Many heart defects are treatable, and with the help of our medical volunteers, Children’s HeartLink has had great results in fostering advancement at our partner hospitals. Our new board of advisors will help us achieve our common goal: to provide access to quality cardiac care for even more children.”

Other members of the international advisory board include (in alphabetical order):

- **J. Brian Atwood**, chair, Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; former head of USAID
- **Joseph A. Dearani, M.D.**, chair, division of cardiovascular surgery, Mayo Clinic; medical director, Children’s HeartLink
- **Kathy Jenkins, M.D., M.P.H.**, department of cardiology, Children’s Hospital Boston
- **Richard Smith, M.D.**, director of UnitedHealth Group’s Chronic Disease Initiative (CDI)
- **Daniel B. Wright, Ph.D.**, president and CEO, GreenPoint Group, a U.S.-China strategic advisory firm; former managing director for China and the Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) at the U.S. Treasury Department

To view an overview of Advisory Board members, including biographies and photos, please visit [http://www.childrensheartlink.org/documents/Master\\_IAB\\_Bios.pdf](http://www.childrensheartlink.org/documents/Master_IAB_Bios.pdf).

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### **About Children’s HeartLink**

Founded in 1969, Children’s HeartLink is a nonprofit organization partnering with health care centers in underserved regions of the world to promote sustainable cardiac care for children with congenital or acquired heart disease. Congenital heart disease is the world's most common major birth defect, affecting one in every 120 children. Nearly ninety percent of those newborns are in areas of the world where appropriate medical care is inadequate or unavailable. Children’s HeartLink currently supports partner hospitals and programs in eight countries: Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Malaysia, South Africa, Ukraine and Vietnam. To learn more click on: [www.childrensheartlink.org](http://www.childrensheartlink.org).

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