NEWS RELEASE

WSO joins prestigious UN Economic and Social Council Group

GENEVA | 15 August 2013 – The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was granted special consultative status by the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) earlier this month. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) constitutes one of the principal organs of the United Nations. It is responsible for coordinating the economic, social and related work of 14 UN specialized agencies, including that of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Since 1998, it has held meetings each year with finance ministers heading key committees of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

“Stroke is one of the greatest health challenges facing the world, the second commonest cause of death and a leading cause of disability” explains WSO president Prof. Stephen Davis. “The burden is particularly severe in low and middle income countries where the incidence of stroke is rapidly increasing. Achieving consultative status in ECOSOC will help the WSO in realizing our mission, to reduce the global burden of stroke through prevention, treatment and long-term care” he adds.

The economic burden of stroke is huge and devastating. A downward economic and social spiral often follows a stroke. In the European Union alone, it is estimated to cost member states EUR €38 billion per annum. This cost is set to increase as the number of affected individuals is projected to double by 2050.

The ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to member states and the United Nations system. The recent consultative status given to the WSO will enable it to actively engage with ECOSOC, its subsidiaries bodies, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat, programs, funds and agencies in a number of ways. These include:

- WSO, being in an official position to request the Secretary-General of the United Nations, through the Committee on Non-Governmental Organization, to place items of special interest in the provisional agenda of the Council.
- WSO, being in a position to designate official representatives to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and the United Nations offices in Geneva and Vienna to sit as observers at public meetings of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, the General Assembly, Human Rights Council and other United Nations intergovernmental decision-making bodies.

Prof. Bo Norrving, WSO immediate past-president and chair of the Global Policy Committee notes “receiving this consultative status is an important sign of recognition of the activities of the WSO in one
of the major areas on public health globally: the combat of stroke. It significantly broadened the platform for our work”.

There are 15 million people who have a stroke each year. According to the WHO, stroke is the second leading cause of death for people above the age of 60, and the fifth leading cause in people aged 15 to 59. Each year, nearly six million people die from stroke. In fact, stroke is responsible for more deaths annually than those attributed to AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria put together. Stroke is also the leading cause of long-term disability irrespective of age, gender, ethnicity or country. One in six people will have a stroke in their lifetime.

The World Stroke Organization is an NGO “in official relations” with the World Health Organizations (WHO) and collaborates closely with them. This represents a major advance for the professional stroke community and for the support of the worldwide fight against stroke, facilitating ongoing projects such as stroke surveillance, the production of stroke awareness materials and the development of combined sessions and symposia with the WHO at international conferences.

WSO leadership have participated at prestigious global health events such as the First Global Ministerial Conference on Non-communicable Diseases (Moscow) the United Nations High-level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases (New York) and meetings on Global NCD targets and indicators (Geneva). WSO is also actively involved in the revision of the international classification of diseases (ICD-11) at the WHO.

About the World Stroke Organization
The World Stroke Organization (WSO) was established in October 2006. WSO’s mission is to reduce the global burden of stroke through prevention, treatment and long-term care. As the lead international body for stroke, WSO aims to accomplish its mission by:

- Fostering the best standards of practice
- Increasing stroke awareness among the population and among health professionals
- Preventing subtle cerebrovascular disease leading to gait disorders, imbalance, vascular cognitive impairment and behavioral changes
- Influencing policies for stroke prevention and improved health services
- Providing education in collaboration with public and private organizations
- Facilitating stroke research advocacy for people with stroke
- Fostering the development of systems and organizations for long-term care and support of stroke survivors and their families.

With individual and organizational members worldwide, including stroke support groups, WSO is the global voice for stroke. WSO is the only international stroke NGO in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO). Prof. Stephen Davis, MD, FRCP, Edin FRACP, from Melbourne, Australia, is the president of the World Stroke Organization.