Genome Institute of Singapore and Roche announce collaboration on development of SARS detection kit

May 22 2003 – Genome Institute of Singapore and Roche Diagnostics announced an agreement to co-develop a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) detection kit based on one of Roche's platform technologies – Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) technology. SARS is a respiratory infection, caused by a new strain of coronavirus, that has recently been reported in a number of regions, including Singapore. Since its outbreak in March, the Genome Institute of Singapore has been working to sequence the genetic code of the SARS coronavirus and has defined its genetic diversity. This information is critical to the development of robust diagnostic assays.

"Until SARS is eradicated, our scientists will continue to work with the relevant authorities and organisations to find solutions in stamping out the disease," said Dr REN Ee Chee, Deputy Director of Genome Institute of Singapore, who is Principal Investigator on this project. "This research collaboration with Roche will enable us to tap the company's strengths in diagnostic test development as well as their ability to make therapeutics and vaccines generally available to the public."

"Roche is committed to doing its part for the international community by offering our expertise to assist any on-going efforts to develop a SARS kit. We are privileged to be able to contribute to this partnership," said Mr. Franz T Walt, a member of the Roche Diagnostics Executive Committee and Head of Region, Asia Pacific. "We believe that this landmark agreement will enable both parties to bring together their respective expertise to help speed up the process of finding a reliable detection test in the shortest possible time", added Mr Walt.

To test bed the new detection tool, the Genome Institute of Singapore and Roche will be teaming up with the Singapore General Hospital. The diagnostic kit is expected to be ready by July 2003.