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Former U.S. Assistant Surgeon General, Dr. Susan Blumenthal, to Lead Meridian International Center's Global Health Program

Washington DC - 21 Aug 2008: Meridian International Center today announced that its board member, former U.S. Assistant Surgeon General Susan Blumenthal, M.D. will lead Meridian's new Global Health Program. The Global Health Program is now a key initiative of Meridian's programs that include world affairs public briefings and conferences, U.S. State Department International Visitor Leadership Programs, and arts and cultural activities.

"Today, 79% of people suffering from chronic diseases are found in the developing world, and 1100 epidemics have been reported by the World Health Organization in the last five years alone. These problems have humanitarian, economic and national security implications that impact all nations. The new Meridian Global Health Program will provide an important forum to address these issues," said Dr. Blumenthal.

Health will also be included as a critical track in Meridian's *Global Engagement Initiative* that brings together leading experts, innovators, and thought leaders around five major worldwide issues: cultural understanding; entrepreneurship and economic development; energy and the environment; new media and technology; and global health. Meridian's *Global Engagement Initiative* builds on its 50-year history of facilitating international exchange and cooperation on key issues.

"Meridian brings together the brightest leaders from around the world to foster the international cooperation necessary to help develop lasting solutions to global problems," said Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday, President of Meridian International Center. "The *Global Engagement Initiative* was created to tune into public opinion, listen to the priorities of world citizens, and to strengthen global collaboration on problems that transcend national boundaries and require international cooperation to achieve a common solution."

Rear Admiral Susan J. Blumenthal, M.D., M.P.A. served as U.S. Assistant Surgeon General, Senior Global and E-Health Advisor in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She is an internationally recognized medical expert and leader who has been a major force in bringing important public health issues including disease and violence prevention, women's health and mental illness to scientific and public attention. Dr. Blumenthal has been at the forefront of applying technology to improve health and to encourage international collaboration. She was among the first in the United States government to use the Internet for health education, envisioning and establishing several award-winning health websites including *4woman.gov*, *safeyouth.org*, *nutrition.gov*, *globalhealth.gov*, and *4collegewomen.org* and is currently developing *healthmiddleeast.org*

About Meridian International Center: Meridian International Center, led by Ambassador Stuart W. Holliday, is the United States' premier non-profit and non-partisan institution dedicated to advancing international understanding through public diplomacy and global engagement. Since 1960, Meridian has made the exchange of people, ideas and the arts possible through our combination of professional exchanges, international conferences, arts and education programs. For more information, visit www.meridian.org.