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NOVARTIS AG
Form 6-K
March 12, 2004

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20549

FORM 6-K

REPORT OF FOREIGN PRIVATE ISSUER
PURSUANT TO RULE 13a-16 or 15d-16 UNDER
THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Report on Form 6-K dated March 12, 2004
(Commission File No. 1-15024)

Novartis AG
(Name of Registrant)

Lichtstrasse 35
4056 Basel
Switzerland

(Address of Principal Executive Offices)

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant files or will file annual reports under cover of Form 20-F or Form 40-F:

Form 20-F: Form 40-F:

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is submitting the Form 6-K in paper as permitted by Regulation S-T Rule 101(b)(1):

Yes: No:

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is submitting the Form 6-K in paper as permitted by Regulation S-T Rule 101(b)(7):

Yes: No:

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant by furnishing the information contained in this form is also thereby furnishing the information to the Commission pursuant to Rule 12g3-2(b) under the Securities Exchange Act of 1934.

Yes: No:

Enclosure: Press release, dated March 12, 2004

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[NOVARTIS LOGO]

Novartis International AG
Novartis Global Communications
CH-4002 Basel
Switzerland

Internet Address:
<http://www.novartis.com>

Nehl Horton
Novartis Global Media Relations
Tel + 41 61 324 2200
nehl.horton@group.novartis.com

MEDIA RELEASE o COMMUNIQUE AUX MEDIAS o MEDIENMITTEILUNG

Novartis responds to request by French market authority

Basel, 12 March, 2004 - Responding to a request by AMF, the French market authority, Novartis AG confirms they are exploring the feasibility of a combination with Aventis. No decision has been taken yet whether or not to pursue such a transaction.

Novartis AG (NYSE: NVS) is a world leader in pharmaceuticals and consumer health. In 2003, the Group's businesses achieved sales of USD 24.9 billion and a net income of USD 5.0 billion. The Group invested approximately USD 3.8 billion in R&D. Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, Novartis Group companies employ about 78,500 people and operate in over 140 countries around the world.

This release contains certain "forward-looking statements" relating to the Group's business, intentions or expectations. Such statements reflect the current views of the Group with respect to future events and are subject to certain risks, uncertainties and assumptions. There can be no guarantee regarding the existence or nonexistence of any major acquisitions in the future. Many factors can cause actual events to be materially different from the Group's current intentions or expectations.

For further information please consult <http://www.novartis.com>.

SIGNATURES

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, Novartis AG has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned, thereunto duly authorized.

NOVARTIS AG

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Date: March 12, 2004

By: /s/ GEORGE MILLER

Name: George Miller
Title: Deputy General Counsel

By: /s/ MALCOLM CHEETHAM

Name: Malcolm Cheetham
Title: Chief Accounting Officer