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NOVARTIS AG
Form 6-K
March 24, 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 24, 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 23, 2004

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[NOVARTIS LOGO]

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MEDIA RELEASE ○ COMMUNIQUE AUX MEDIAS ○ MEDIENMITTEILUNG

Novartis clarifies position regarding Aventis

Basel, 23 March 2004 - Following a second request from the French market authority (AMF) to clarify its position regarding Aventis, Novartis confirmed today that it had completed its feasibility study on a potential combination with Aventis. This study concluded that a business case is viable.

A working hypothesis included a potential spin-off of non-core Aventis and Novartis products into a new entity that would preserve jobs, specifically in France and Germany, creating a pharmaceutical company with product development, licensing and commercial operations including manufacturing.

Although the business case looks viable, the negative attitude of the French Government has influenced Novartis' consideration to a point that it will only enter into a negotiation phase if formally invited by the Aventis Supervisory Board and if the French Government assumed a neutral position.

The company stated that neither negotiations nor discussions about price have taken place.

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

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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

Date: March 24, 2004

By: /s/ URS BAERLOCHER

Name: Urs Baerlocher
Title: General Counsel