IFPMA

STATEMENT

73rd session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe (EURO), Astana (October 24th-26th)

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Agenda item 6: Health emergency preparedness, response and resilience in the WHO European Region (2024–2029): Preparing for a new regional strategy and action plan (Preparedness 2.0)

In the preparations for the new regional strategy on Health Emergency Preparedness 2.0 we would like to share some of industry's key lessons learned from our response to COVID-19 about how we can ensure the world is better prepared against future pandemics. The biopharmaceutical innovation ecosystem delivered innovative vaccines in record time and scale to respond to COVID-19. We are committed to playing our part in future pandemics and further research and development (R&D) is essential to help us prepare.

We have seen the strength of a robust innovation ecosystem expand partnerships, voluntary knowledge-sharing, and technology transfer in unprecedented ways. This system, composed of universities and academic research bodies, biotech start-ups, small and large biopharmaceutical companies from industrialized and developing countries, must be preserved and strengthened. Research labs, and the network of licensing agreements and technology sharing that connect them to each other and to other stakeholders in both the public and private sectors, must be treated like frontline defenders against our lethal enemies. To be better prepared for the future more investment is needed for making healthcare systems more resilient and in expanding Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Intellectual property system is key to attract the R&D investments for both vaccines and therapeutics against diseases that have the potential to cause pandemics in the future. Alongside this, immediate and unfettered access to pathogens and their genetic information will be essential in allowing scientists to respond rapidly to future pandemics and meet the ambition of the 100 Days Mission and respond even faster in future. The immediate sharing of SARS-CoV-2 pathogen data was core to the unprecedented speed of the scientific response to COVID19 and will be central to our response to the next pandemic.

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Conditions, uncertainties, or negotiations attached to pathogen sharing risk significant delays in the development of countermeasures, as we have seen under certain national legislation implementing the Nagoya Protocol – and need to be avoided in future systems.

Via the Berlin Declaration, industry has expressed its commitment to early and equitable access by reserving an allocation of real-time production of vaccine, treatments, and diagnostics for priority populations in lower-income countries and to take measures to make them available and affordable.

When a pandemic is declared, sufficient, dedicated, and sustainable financing must be available immediately to procure goods for countries with limited or no capacity to finance their own pandemic purchases. Technical assistance must also be quickly provided to speed response implementation.

These proposals must be matched by a new social contract between countries that underpins a more equitable roll-out of medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics. This will require political leadership to allow frictionless trade of medical supplies and a commitment not to introduce export restrictions, which hampered the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines.

About IFPMA

The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) represents over 90 innovative pharmaceutical companies and associations around the world. Our industry's almost three million employees discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that advance global health. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community improve the lives of people everywhere.

For more information, visit ifpma.org.

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