

## Pharma trade body welcomes the multilateral framework to nurturing future biodiversity adopted at UN conference in Montreal despite no acknowledgement yet of the importance for global health security to exempt pathogens

**20 December 2022**, Geneva – The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) welcomes the adoption at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) of a framework that addresses biodiversity loss across the globe. The Global Biodiversity Framework agreed in Montreal has the potential to be a real turning point in how ecosystems are protected, nurturing biodiversity for future generations.

We appreciate big, bold moves are needed. However, the innovative pharmaceutical industry notes with concern that, while it might seem a small detail, the lack of consideration on the fundamental difference between the biodiversity of flora and fauna versus pathogens, including genomic sequence data (or “DSI”) derived from such pathogens, is a problem for all those involved in R&D of vaccines, treatments and diagnostics to fight future outbreaks. Ensuring immediate and unhindered pathogen sharing, through a public health exemption to access and benefit (ABS) rules, is critical for the future of public health.

The situation today is far from perfect. Today, nearly two hundred jurisdictions are Parties to the Nagoya Protocol<sup>1</sup>, a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Around half of them have some form of provider access to benefit sharing (ABS) rules in place, the majority of which do not differentiate between pathogens that must be suppressed from flora and fauna biodiversity which need protecting. To date, only 12 countries have recognized the importance of pathogens under their national ABS rules.

One of the lessons learned from COVID-19 is the importance of swift and unhindered sharing of the information sequence of SARS-CoV-2<sup>2</sup>. But Zika, Influenza, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome/MERS<sup>3</sup> have all fallen foul of the ABS rules, which have delayed pathogen sharing and put lives at risk. The current system is not fit for purpose to ensure global health security. A multilateral solution must take this into consideration. The need to exempt pathogens remains, in industry’s opinion, the most effective way forward.

**Thomas Cueni, Director General of IFPMA, said:** “COP15 has paved the way for bold and welcome steps to preserve the world’s biodiversity for future generations. But it has been a missed opportunity to improve the world’s response to pandemics. As discussions begin to look at the mechanisms to deliver the Global Biodiversity Framework, there is still time to address the very real threat that Member States can and do withhold sharing information on pathogens for financial or political gain. For the sake of global public health, researchers need to be able to share information about dangerous viruses, bacteria, and other pathogens across borders, from the moment an outbreak is detected. When researchers withhold or delay pathogen sharing, they elevate the severity of an outbreak. IFPMA stands ready to work with governments and other stakeholders to explain why the exemption is important.”

### 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

<sup>1</sup> [Parties to the Nagoya Protocol \(cbd.int\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Applying lessons learned from COVID-19 \(IFPMA\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Omicron collaboration shows need for pathogen sharing deal | Financial Times \(ft.com\)](#)

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](https://ifpma.org). For more information about the pharmaceutical industry's role in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit the [COVID-19 Innovation Timeline](#).

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