

Bolstering action against future pandemics: pharma policy perspectives on delivering medical countermeasures

- Future pandemic preparedness discussions cannot and must not overshadow the need for urgent joint action to redistribute COVID-19 vaccines through COVAX and donations.
- Planning for better pandemic preparedness requires measures to develop effective and safe pandemic products even faster to save lives and livelihoods, which requires first pathogen sharing, second, strong incentive frameworks and third, a sustainable innovation ecosystem.
- To ensure equitable access to those products for people worldwide requires more effective collaboration with governments, multilateral organizations, regulators, and other companies and sectors.

25 October 2021 – Berlin, The annual World Health Summit (WHS) provided a platform for the global health community to take stock of the world’s response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, as well other pressing health threats, such as the rise of antimicrobial resistance, which could next sweep the world. At the WHS, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) announced its [policy perspectives on preparing society against future pandemics](#).

The toll this pandemic is having on lives is real and as every day passes, our joint responsibility to make good our promise of leaving no one behind becomes more pressing. As G20 heads of state and government prepare to meet in Rome on 30-31 October, COVID-19 vaccine production will reach the 9,3 billion doses mark. Of the world’s 5,8 billion adult population, 3,3 billion people have been vaccinated, which calls attention to essential next steps in ensuring that vaccinations reach priority populations where needed. Every crisis provides lessons learnt, and this is no different. The IFPMA has called for all concerned to take a “can do” approach to the current vaccine equity crisis, calling for stakeholders to join it in addressing the allocation, technical, trade, and program challenges needed to get us out of this pandemic. Thomas Cueni, Director General of IFPMA said at the World Health Summit: “Other efforts, while well intentioned, are a distraction and should not be on the menu”.

The global community also needs to look ahead to how we can be better prepared for the next pandemic. The IFPMA is publishing today a new report that recommends a number of policy and practical measures to further enhance effective pandemic preparedness and response, highlighting the role of the industry and the importance of coordination, collaboration and trust between all key stakeholders. The innovative biopharmaceutical industry believes pandemic preparedness needs to be grounded in the knowledge that any response to a pandemic cannot be seen as business as usual. Two concrete proposals to achieve this include: having in place the foundations with the aspiration led out by Chief Science Officers of G7 countries to develop effective and safe pandemic products within 100 days of a pandemic declaration; and enhanced collaboration with governments, multilateral organizations, regulators, and other companies and sectors to ensure equitable access to those products for people worldwide.

Aiming for effective and safe pandemic products within 100 days will require **pre-emptive R&D**. This goal, however, cannot be achieved in the absence of a robust incentive system, built on strong and predictable IP protection. The innovative biopharmaceutical industry commits to investing in research and development (R&D) on target pathogens with epidemic



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and pandemic potential to build a portfolio of promising candidate vaccines, treatments and technologies. It also requires **the immediate sharing of pathogens** with epidemic and pandemic potential, and associated information, with no strings attached. The innovative biopharmaceutical industry commits to ensuring the highest safety protocols for our laboratories and only to use shared samples and genetic sequence data for research purposes and for the production of vaccines, medicines and diagnostics.

The solution to vaccine equity today resides in dose sharing, continuing to optimize output through manufacturing scaling up and voluntary licensing; as well as working together to enable countries to efficiently and effectively vaccinate their people. For future pandemics, it is imperative to continue building on what has worked well: the pivotal role of a strong innovation ecosystem and a strengthened, well-funded procurement system for lower-income countries. The scientific and industrial success has been nothing short of extraordinary. It is also imperative to be better prepared to ensure equitable access to pandemic products for people worldwide.

Thomas Cueni, Director General of IFPMA said at the World Health Summit: “This is where we still have so much to do – and as a global health community have come up short in the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The Innovative biopharmaceutical industry commits for future pandemics to support effective pandemic procurement, and contribute to supporting health care workers and strengthening health systems, planning and delivery. The Industry also commits to working with other stakeholders on new initiatives to ensure the necessary global manufacturing expertise and capacity to vaccinate the world’s population in the fastest possible timeframe during a pandemic.

These industry commitments depend on other stakeholders support to share emerging pathogens and their information for research purposes immediately, no matter where they are discovered. Thomas Cueni, Director General of IFPMA said at the World Health Summit: “This time the delay in pathogen sharing was minimal, but we fear next time red tape may cause unacceptable delays, resulting in more time and lives lost”. He added: “Any conditionalities, uncertainties, duplications or negotiations attached to sharing – such as those under discussion for the BioHub and under certain national legislation implementing the Nagoya Protocol – risk significant delays in development of vaccines and therapies and pose as a significant disincentive to both large and small companies. If countries are not sharing their information about new variants, we simply cannot work on improving our vaccines or developing new ones”.

Concluding, Thomas Cueni said that “We learned during this pandemic that we can only leverage the full potential of multilateral effort such as COVAX and its Facility to enhance equitable vaccine distribution if we manage to unlock funding early to secure doses earlier in the process. We need to draw on lessons to be better prepared for the next crises”.

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