



STATEMENT

IFPMA statement at the 73rd session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe

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)

26 OCTOBER 2023, ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN – In preparation 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 to 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, and 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).

A strong intellectual property system is key to attract the R&D investments we need to develop 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. The immediate sharing of SARS-CoV-2 pathogen data was core to the unprecedented speed of the scientific response to COVID-19 and will be central to our response to the next pandemic.

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.