IFPMA International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers & Associations

16 NOVEMBER 2026

To: Dr Hanan Mohammed Al-Kuwari, Dr Hanan Balkhy, Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, Dr María P. Neira, Mr Budi Gunadi Sadikin, Dr Li Song, Dr Gevorg Tamamyan

SUBJECT: Open letter to the candidates for the post of WHO Director-General

Dear candidates,

Congratulations on your nomination as candidates for Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). This is a significant moment for global health, and the leadership of the WHO will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the institutions and partnerships at the forefront of advancing health globally.

IFPMA represents the global innovative pharmaceutical industry and has worked in official relations with WHO since 1968. Our members research, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that prevent, treat, and increasingly change the course of disease.

Medicines and vaccines have transformed health, enabling people to live longer, healthier lives while contributing to stronger societies and economies. That progress is accelerating: nearly 1,000 new medicines have reached patients over the past two decades, and more than 12,700 are now in development across the R&D ecosystem. Yet many diseases, including high-burden cancers and other chronic conditions, remain difficult to treat or cure, underscoring the need for continued scientific progress. Ensuring this next generation of innovation reaches people will be integral to WHO's mission and to addressing future health challenges.

Your candidacy also comes at a moment of wider debate about the future of the global health architecture. Reform offers an opportunity to focus resources and expertise where they can have greatest impact. From the perspective of the innovative pharmaceutical industry, we believe three principles should guide that effort and WHO's priorities within it:

- **Strengthen health systems so innovations reach those who need them.** A breakthrough only changes lives when people can benefit from it. Strong health systems, effective regulation, and sustainable financing turn scientific progress into better outcomes. WHO's scientific and normative expertise has an important role to play. We encourage WHO to prioritize and resource evidence-based norms and standards, regulatory systems strengthening, streamlined prequalification program, and clinical therapeutic guidelines. WHO

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also brings distinctive value through its support to countries on universal health coverage, including through primary health care, and its leadership on immunization and vaccines.

- **Foster an environment where health innovation can thrive.** Continued scientific progress is critical to tackling chronic disease, antimicrobial resistance, and future health emergencies. Predictable policy and regulatory frameworks, strong intellectual property systems, economic incentives, open trade, and trust in science help sustain that progress. We encourage you to work with Member States to reassess whether WHO is the appropriate forum for activities relating to intellectual property, technology transfer, licensing, and pricing, particularly where these risk undermining innovation incentives or move beyond WHO's core mandate and competencies.

- **Forge partnerships to advance health globally.** Governments, WHO, other multilateral institutions, civil society, and industry bring different strengths. Reform can help clarify where WHO is uniquely placed to contribute and where others are better placed to lead, reducing duplication and making better use of expertise. There is also a strong case for safeguarding WHO's unique capacities in surveillance, preparedness, and outbreak response, including its role in the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS), Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS), and the International Coordinating Group (ICG) on vaccine provision emergency vaccine stockpiles. Industry brings scientific, regulatory, manufacturing, supply, and implementation expertise, and early, transparent engagement can help turn shared ambitions into practical solutions.

As you set out your vision for WHO, IFPMA stands ready to contribute our deep scientific expertise, experience, and commitment to help to solve global health challenges We welcome continued dialogue and the opportunity to work side by side toward a healthier, resilient, and more prosperous future for all.

Yours sincerely,

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