

Innovative health industries united in welcoming United Nations General Assembly Resolution on “International Cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19”

The rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is creating severe disruption to societies and economies, testing health systems worldwide and profoundly impacting the lives of those most vulnerable.

On behalf of global biopharmaceutical and medical technologies companies, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA), the International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA), the Global Medical Technology Alliance (GMTA), the Global Diagnostic Imaging, Healthcare IT & Radiation Therapy Trade Association (DITTA), and the Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF) welcome the initiative by the Government of Mexico to highlight the need for effective international cooperation to ensure that no one is left behind in the race against COVID-19 through the UNGA Resolution “International Cooperation to ensure global access to medicines, vaccines and medical equipment to face COVID-19” (A/75/L.56).

Our organizations believe that coordinated, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder action is the only possible solution to mitigate the impact of this unprecedented global health emergency. We welcome the Resolution’s call for participation of the private sector in coordination efforts. As WHO’s Director General has recently stated, “the private sector has an essential role to play in combating this public health crisis through their expertise, innovation, and resources.”

COVID-19 is teaching us a crucial lesson: facing any global health challenge, in particular one of such unprecedented scale, requires solidarity, truly inclusive cooperation and even closer efforts to ensuring health systems’ resiliency. As this Resolution calls for United Nations-wide coordinated efforts, we believe that priority should be placed on critical aspects, including strengthening the global supply chain to support continuity, ensuring effective surveillance mechanisms, fostering strong and adaptable resource capacity within health systems, and promoting the establishment of procedures for fast evaluation and approval of new health technologies.

We also call for trade barriers to be lifted. These impact both our ability to receive materials, including critical raw ingredients, materials, APIs and medical devices, for our own supply chains. They also impede our ability to distribute our critically-needed finished products. Avoiding unnecessary national stockpiling of medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and medical devices also helps support supply continuity.

Furthermore, the global scientific community requires the unhindered flow of scientific information related to COVID-19 in order to develop innovative medical products. In the spirit of reinforcing greater international cooperation, we encourage efforts to ensure scientific data relevant to COVID-19 is able to be shared in a timely and efficient manner with researchers globally.

Since the early days of this pandemic, our industries have responded through many initiatives aimed at providing and prioritizing delivery of needed critical products to tackle COVID-19 while also addressing research and development of new health technologies including preventive tools, diagnostics, treatment, medicines, and vaccines¹, motivated by a strong sense of responsibility to act together, in partnership with WHO and governments, to support health systems across the world in a concerted and collective response.

The decades-long investments our industries have made in new technology research, underpinned by sound intellectual property protection, have prepared us to act swiftly to respond to the crisis. Our member companies are pushing the boundaries of science, developing workable solutions and ensuring there is capacity to scale up. They are also re-directing manufacture of urgently-needed products once solutions are found, while at the same time, ensuring continuity of global supply for critical products.

Consistent with the spirit of this resolution, several multi-stakeholder collaborative research programs have been taking place in order to fast-track the development of products and solutions with institutions such as BARDA, CEPI, IMI among others. Throughout, our industries have been mobilizing and pooling significant resources in partnership with the public sector. These various approaches are bearing fruit, with a large number of competitive leads for diagnostics, treatments and vaccines already identified for testing in just a couple of months from the beginning of the pandemic outbreak.

Furthermore, our industries are committed² to working with governments, insurers, and other stakeholders to make new viable health technologies to fight COVID-19 available and affordable in an efficient and timely way, while ensuring other patients in need of live-saving products continue to have access to them.

Focusing on these critical components, including reinforcing the mindset of systems thinking and international cooperation, will better prepare and equip our societies for future crises. Regular communication and coordination between government and industry is the fastest and surest path to success. A strong partnership is essential now and in the weeks and months to come.

We look forward to maintaining an open channel of communication and to working closely with you to solve problems and promote timely access to prevention and treatment.

New York, April 21, 2020

¹ See, e.g., <https://www.bio.org/policy/human-health/vaccines-biodefense/coronavirus>

² https://www.ifpma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IFPMA_Commitment_COVID-19.pdf