

Charter for Equitable Access to Covid-19 Tools

Six principles for Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A)

We have joined efforts to launch the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) in order to build partnerships dedicated to the development, production, availability, procurement and delivery of COVID-19 health products that can end the pandemic. The ACT Accelerator has made substantial strides towards these goals already, with new Rapid Tests, life-saving Dexamethasone treatments and with the establishment of the COVID-19 Vaccine Facility (COVAX Facility), which is pooling global resources to expedite the development and manufacture of vaccines to ensure universal, equitable access.

Galvanized by a global mobilization, promoted among others by WHO, the European Union and the G20, we have mobilized significant resources in a very short time to support the goals of the ACT-Accelerator. We welcome existing agreements and contributions from different stakeholders by both the public and private sector aimed at achieving the goals of the ACT-Accelerator. However, we recognize the remaining financing gap and call on all parties to step-up political, financial, normative, technical and other efforts to ensure the full operationalization of the ACT-Accelerator. We acknowledge that active contributions by all stakeholders worldwide are key to ensure an efficient and equitable response.

In line with the 73rd World Health Assembly resolution on COVID-19 response (WHA73.1)¹ and four UN General Assembly Resolutions (A/RES/74/306, A/RES/74/307, A/RES/74/274, A/RES/74/2)², we recall the need for all countries to have unhindered, timely access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccine with a view to achieving Universal Health Coverage, in order to mount the COVID-19 response. We consider ACT-A as the global key initiative to provide a response to the decisive challenge of the scale-up phase: ensuring equitable access in recognition of the role of extensive immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good.

Building on the original ACT Accelerator call to action made on April 24, 2020 under the auspices of WHO, the Joint Communique by representatives of industry and the Facilitation Council Statement, we call upon all stakeholders to ensure that access to COVID-19 health products is equitable, affordable and that products are available to all that need them, based on the following guiding principles:

1/ Seek to leverage publicly funded research. Further efforts should be made to fully leverage public investments in research through ongoing coordination, in collaboration with the WHO; promotion of data and knowledge sharing; and collaboration with the private sector to share costs and risks of development and scale-up global access. Collaboration between the public and private sectors could facilitate transparency in investments and costs along the research, development and production chain and facilitate fair pricing, and enable voluntary licensing agreements for the timely, equitable and affordable access to, and rapid and broad distribution of resulting products and services to prevent, diagnose, treat and contain COVID-19. In return for public investments, we would

¹ https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA73/A73_R1-en.pdf

² <https://www.un.org/en/ga/74/resolutions.shtml>

encourage private firms on a voluntary basis to be transparent about the public funding at their disposal for the development of COVID-19 health products to ensure transparent and affordable pricing. This will enable companies to set fair prices, and ensure funders and other stakeholders that prices indeed are fair.

2/ Encourage the sharing of data and knowledge. Knowledge and data can strengthen our collective efforts to advance scientific discovery, accelerate delivery of new innovations, and facilitate broad sharing of the benefits of scientific advancement and its applications based on the right to health. Ensuring safety and efficacy reviews and adherence to the highest scientific and ethical standards, including for publication of data and studies, will also help build public confidence. Research data related to COVID-19 could be made public and accessible on a voluntary or contractual basis or on the basis of existing exceptions and limitations without delay, openly accessible and following the FAIR principles where possible. In addition, a wide range of participants and countries should be involved in trials.

3/ Encourage technology transfer, fair and transparent prices. Every technology, whether novel or pre-existing that has clear public health benefits, will require resources in order to ensure the capacity to deliver at scale. Therefore innovations must be met by sufficient, dedicated, and timely funding, and if necessary be financed with public money.

Technology transfer is crucial to enhance diversified and local production capacity and thereby expand equitable access during health emergencies. Where appropriate, we encourage voluntary technology transfer and licensing of intellectual property and patent pooling including through the Medicines Patent Pool. We also encourage the collaboration of networks of industry in both developed and emerging economies to manufacture new products at scale across the world, including with manufacturers of generic pharmaceutical products. The COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) can be relevant to facilitate open sharing of knowledge and other know how related to new COVID-19 technologies. With input from the public and private sector, we will identify and support the implementation of a range of options for scaling up the development, manufacturing, and distribution capacities needed for the equitable and timely access to quality, affordable and efficacious diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines that respect the provisions of relevant international treaties, including the provisions of the TRIPS Agreement and the flexibilities affirmed by the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health.

4/ Pooled and collective financing for equitable access. Development and equitable global distribution of tools for epidemic preparedness and response to COVID-19 need collective and pooled funding. Support for ACT-A, the only comprehensive and global mechanism that can accelerate the end of the pandemic and restore the global economy, both through in-kind and financial contribution is crucial. Support to the global COVID-19 response may be considered part of domestic macroeconomic stimulus spending. Funders could consider options for (i) additionality, (ii) going beyond contributions from traditional donor base and established ODA budgets , (iii) avoiding increasing the debt of countries that already have a high-debt burden, (iv) utilising new or current innovative financing mechanisms to assure swift availability from public funds that could frontload resources based on government commitments to payments over several years and to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation via new taxation channels, (v) applying soft guidance on burden-sharing related to ability to pay including the private sector. Furthermore, contributions from the

private sector, including through impact investing, as well as different forms of public-private partnerships i.e. guarantees, matching funds and social impact bonds should be actively sought.

5/ Foster health systems' strengthening as the basis for delivering COVID-19 health products.

COVID-19 health products can only be universally accessible if countries' health systems are able to deliver them to their populations and integrate them in their national health systems. To support the rollout of COVID-19 health products and in line with WHA 73.1, we will work closely with countries worldwide upon their request, to implement their multisectoral national action plans, in strengthening their health systems to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in maintaining the safe provision of all other essential public health functions and services. A holistic approach involving public and private players as well as communities should be taken to strengthen health systems sustainably, including their six building blocks (governance, financing, service delivery, human resources, medical products and technologies, and information systems) and basic public health functions (e.g. surveillance, research and prevention), building and capitalizing on all investments.

6/ Global coordination for equitable allocation of COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines,

under WHO guidance is important to enable timely and equitable access to all that need them. In supply-constrained conditions, governments must seek to achieve the most effective public health impact possible. Equitable and timely allocation procedures, informed by ethical values and public health needs are crucial to maximize public health benefits and ensure that scarce health products are available and accessible to those most in need first.

We also reaffirm the following principles that ACT-A is based upon: evidence and science-based decisions; fair and equitable access for everyone; independence in decision-making through prevention and management of conflict of interests; promotion of effective multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity; inclusive and qualified representation in critical decision-making and coordination bodies; robust, effective and comprehensive protection of personal data; "Leaving no one's health behind" in achieving Universal Health Coverage, guided by the principle of human security; and alignment with WHO Ethics Guidance.