Health Action International at 40 – A Word from Executive Director, Tim Reed

Health Action International was born during the World Health Assembly in Geneva in 1981. A year in which the world celebrated the eradication of smallpox, brought about by a mass vaccination campaign led by WHO. Forty years later, we are in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, and face an ongoing fight to ensure equitable access to safe, effective, quality-medicines and vaccines for everyone, everywhere. While this work remains a priority, we will take the time to reflect on the past 40 years and celebrate our milestone anniversary.

Over the course of the next 12 months, while we continue to advance policies that put the needs of people ahead of private profits, we will not only look back on our work, struggles and successes of the last four decades, but also look forward to what the future holds for access to medicines. Civil society has played an invaluable role over the years in fighting diseases that devastate lives—smallpox and AIDS, and now COVID-19, are just some examples. That role can and must continue to grow in the face of future threats, from emerging pandemics to antimicrobial resistance, and of course the misuse of corporate power. Where governments and the private sector fail to act, we will be there to hold them accountable. Drawing on our vast global network, we will reflect on how we can put our wealth of experience and learning to best use to share knowledge, disrupt the prevailing system and, ultimately, improve lives.

Make sure to follow us across social media to find out more about past—and our future—as a movement. We look forward to engaging with all of you, new faces and old, in this special year in HAI’s history.