

Governments who Support Transparency Must Raise Their Voices at the World Health Assembly

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We, health advocates, academics, patients and healthcare professionals, have for some time sounded the alarm over the threat to public health posed by the excessive high prices of a number of medicines, including life-saving ones.

At the Second World Health Organization (WHO) Fair Pricing Forum, held in Johannesburg between 11 and 14 April 2019, we were inspired by the strength and resilience of South African civil society groups mobilised against unaffordable cancer drugs. We were also heartened by the growing consensus to include transparency as a component of the definition of a fair price.

We welcome the steps taken by the WHO to address high prices and other obstacles to access to medicines—through the WHO roadmap on access to medicines—which includes action on misaligned innovation priorities and misuse of intellectual property protection mechanisms. However, we are concerned by the lack of engagement shown during the latest Fair Pricing Forum by other relevant stakeholders, including, with a few notable exceptions, Member States and the pharmaceutical industry.

While we wait for more detailed information, the undersigned express our initial support to WHO follow-up to the Fair Pricing Forum, provided that measures, working groups and other forms of deliberation contribute to offer lasting solutions through meaningful participation of all stakeholders and concerned parties. This discussion process must be inclusive, transparent and, above all, consistent with other global health initiatives.

The upcoming World Health Assembly will be a turning point in the fight to promote and improve access to medicines by introducing higher standards of transparency in critical phases of the access to medicines continuum. We expect those governments who have endorsed such principles to raise their voice and let their support be heard.

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