

Statement to WHO Executive Board 142: Addressing the Global Shortage of, and Access to, Medicines and Vaccines

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Health Action International appreciates the opportunity to address the Executive Board on a topic that remains both our passion and core business: Addressing the global shortage of—and access to—medicines and vaccines.

Health Action International welcomes the comprehensive summary of the WHO's activities and actions to foster Member States' capacities to secure adequate access to quality-assured medicines and vaccines, as well as the acknowledgement of the United Nations Secretary General's High Level Panel on Access to Medicines. We hope synergies can be found with other global initiatives.

We share most of the report's analysis on factors negatively impacting access to medicines and vaccines, notably the lack of transparency regarding costs of R&D production and prices; the misuse—and abuse—of intellectual property rights; and weak regulatory capabilities.

HAI acknowledges the lead of some Member States engaged in inter-country cooperation, sharing pricing information, and participating in joint procurement schemes. We also support the efforts of countries, such as Malaysia and Colombia, to make use of TRIPS flexibilities.

We back the WHO Secretariat's continued efforts to provide technical assistance to Member States on public-health oriented management of intellectual property rights, especially during trade negotiations.

Finally, as noted in the Director's report, transparency remains an issue. Indeed, it is desperately needed throughout the entire medicines sector. The Medicines Transparency Alliance, initially a joint project with WHO, and now specifically working on sexual and reproductive health commodities in Africa, puts transparency front and centre, and has proven its impact on the medicines policy process.

The opposite—opacity—directly limits access to medicines.

All actors engaged in access to medicines must adopt transparency as a core value if we are to achieve equitable access to medicines, which is imperative for the attainment of universal health coverage.