

Statement to WHA71 on Addressing the Global Shortage of, and Access to, Medicines and Vaccines

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Thank you, Chair

Stichting Health Action International appreciates the opportunity to take the floor on an issue that is both our core business and our passion.

We welcome the specific attention given here to timely access to safe, effective, quality-assured, affordable medicines and other health products. This is both a critical component of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and a cornerstone of the human right to health, as acknowledged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

In its efforts to promote and improve access to medicines, we encourage WHO to engage with the widest possible range of stakeholders and concerned parties, including civil society, academia, and patient and consumers groups, to gather ideas, proposals and insights. In doing so, stringent rules governing conflicts of interest should be respected and enforced.

Regarding the elaboration of a roadmap to guide WHO actions on access to medicines and vaccines, we join our voice to those of Member States and non-state actors in asking WHO to keep working towards greater transparency in key areas such as the cost of R&D, pricing decisions and patents.

Recommendations by other entities, including the Consultative Expert Working Group on Research and Development (CEWG) and the High Level Panel (HLP) on Access to Medicines, should be considered for inclusion in the roadmap.

It is important that IP-management tools, TRIPS flexibilities and other mechanisms, be a core part of the roadmap and technical cooperation offered by WHO to Member States. We reject and will continue to oppose, attempts to water-down and erode the legitimacy of TRIPS flexibilities as a public health tool.

We look forward to contributing to the upcoming discussions on the roadmap, and hope that this global, cooperative effort to find solutions to a problem that knows no border not be diluted by short-sighted unilateral actions aimed at defending private interests.