

22 November, 2017

Health Action International Statement on World Health Organization's General Programme of Work

*Statement delivered at Executive Board Special Session on the
Draft 13th General Programme of Work (Agenda Item 3)*

Stichting Health Action International (HAI) welcomes the World Health Organization's (WHO) General Programme of Work and the opportunity to comment on this important milestone.

As the Programme of Work notes, access to quality-assured medicines plays a crucial role in improving and expanding Universal Health Coverage and notes that the high cost of medicines remains prohibitive for far too many people. We therefore support WHO policies that improve and accelerate access to generics and biosimilar products.

WHO has an important stewardship role to play in coordinating research and development (R&D) efforts based on health needs. These efforts should build upon existing efforts, such as the Global Observatory on Health R&D, the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership, and the Global Strategy on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property.

WHO, Member States, and partners can play a major role in advancing a new model of R&D based on the principle of de-linkage. We support and encourage WHO to invest time and resources in feasibility studies of alternative innovation models, especially for cancer and multi-drug resistant tuberculosis.

Given such widespread consensus on the impact that intellectual property (IP) protection measures, such as patents and supplementary protection certificates, have on access to medical technologies, we are disappointed not to find it in the text. We encourage WHO to scale up its technical assistance on IP management tools, such as flexibilities, to reduce costs and improve access to medicines.

Finally, we welcome the intention to provide technical assistance to Member States to strengthen key data systems and the promotion of open reporting of health data. We would suggest, however, that clinical trial data and procurement/reimbursement prices be included. Open data is, indeed, a public good.

HAI remains committed to collaboration with WHO at all levels, through our joint work on access to medicines, neglected tropical diseases, and strengthening national health systems.