

Statement to the WHO Informal Discussion of the Roadmap Report on Access to Medicines and Vaccines 2019–2023

10 September, 2018

Thank you Chair,

Stichting Health Action International (HAI) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussions on the World Health Organization's (WHO) Roadmap for Access 2019–2023. We note positively the document under discussion here today, and appreciate the efforts of the Secretariat in translating the mandate of Member States in addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines into a workable strategy.

Access to medicines is a cornerstone of the promotion and defence of public health, plays a crucial role in the fulfillment of the human right to health, and is essential for the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC).

Improving access and avoiding shortages of medicines is a collective effort. Across all HAI's areas of work, such as [strengthening health systems](#), addressing the challenges of [access to insulin](#), promoting the use of TRIPS flexibilities to improve and secure access to medicines, and in supporting technology transfer to combat [neglected tropical diseases](#) (NTDs), we have seen first-hand the importance of stakeholder collaboration, transparency and political will.

In partnership with the international health community, WHO must prioritise closing the gap and addressing existing imbalances effecting access to medicines and vaccines. In particular, it has a crucial role in monitoring and promoting the use of TRIPS flexibilities and other IP management tools for the betterment of access to medicines. WHO is the only United Nations agency with the knowledge, capacity and mandate to evaluate the impact of free trade agreements on public health. It is imperative that technical cooperation on the matter be resourced and reinforced.

Transparency is not only a prerequisite for good governance; it can also provide a major boost to efficiency and accountability of public actions, policies and programmes. We welcome the importance the Roadmap places on increased transparency in critical domains, including medicine pricing and clinical trials. However, we need WHO to go beyond this and include figures for the cost of research and development (for example, to ascertain the specific amount of public and private investments), and procurement schemes (to assess rebates and discounts). On the latter, WHO could provide technical assistance to civil society and national authorities to develop joint tools and platforms for accountability in health spending, including on pharmaceuticals.

We remain confident that Member States will fully engage in this exercise, not only through the contribution of ideas and suggestions, but that they will also commit resources and provide the necessary political support for WHO to be able to respond adequately to short-sighted unilateral actions aimed at defending private interests, and other threats to a shared global health agenda.