

Statement to the 148th session of the WHO Executive Board

Agenda Item 7

Expanding access to effective treatments for cancer and rare and orphan diseases, including medicines, vaccines, medical devices, etc...

Health Action International welcomes document EB148/9 and commends the Secretariat for its thorough review of ongoing initiatives and challenges regarding critical health goods, most notably diagnostics, but also vaccines and medicines for rare diseases. We appreciate being provided with updates on the implementation of Resolution WHA72.8.

Regarding the fight against cancer, we believe that the WHO prequalification of biotherapeutics initiated in 2018 is making a difference in achieving better and faster access conditions. We are convinced that the information made available on in vitro diagnostics through WHO instruments will be useful in dealing with other non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes.

Transparency is crucial in accelerating access to medicines while accountability remains a critical pillar of good governance and effective public policy. That is why resolution WHA72.8 was so widely heralded as historic. Nearly two years on, and we struggle to identify where the Secretariat is engaged in implementing WHA72.8, other than through initiatives instigated by WHO regions and already existing programs, such as the GSPOA.

The upcoming Fair Pricing Forum in Buenos Aires could be the opportunity for WHO to respond to Member States and civil society demands for specific steps on greater transparency of pharmaceutical products, including pricing and independently accessible research and development costs. Finally, we call on pharmaceutical industry to uphold their responsibility and collaborate in making relevant information available while refraining from taking economic advantage of existing information asymmetries that enable excessively high prices and inefficient public interventions.