

SOUTH CENTRE STATEMENT TO THE WHA 73 SESSION

Item 13

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that, despite the magnitude of the global health challenges it has to face, the WHO is currently unable to fully enforce its directives, norms and standards. It also shows that its funding is neither sustainable nor adequate to respond effectively to current and future global health crises. Overreliance on voluntary targeted funding puts at risk its capacity to operate as the global agency responsible for public health. These are some of the main challenges facing the WHO today.

There is a window of opportunity to build a stronger organization with the ability to act independently and with effective capacity to lead on global health issues. In view of a raising nationalistic approach to health issues, the WHO has a crucial role to play in ensuring international cooperation based on the principle of solidarity. It is the only way to address the urgent global health challenges, including expanding access to health services and medical products, preventing and stopping infectious diseases, preparing for epidemics and tackling antimicrobial resistance. It is also the only way to protect the world's poorest and most vulnerable population.

Three main areas for reform of the WHO are the following:

1. Strengthen the WHO as an international public agency

The assessed regular contributions of the Member States should be increased to represent at least 51% of the organizations' total budget., so as for the WHO to fully operate as an independent international public institution. WHO's engagement with non-State actors must be fully aligned with the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA).

2. Introduce mechanisms for the enforcement of its directives, norms and standards

Effective and coordinated action on global health issues by WHO requires the use of articles 19, 20 and 21 of its Constitution for the adoption of binding instruments and compliance mechanisms that ensure the implementation of directives, norms and standards issued by the organization.

3. Give more weight to the normative function of the WHO

The WHO should prioritize its normative and standard setting work, supported by adequate enforcement mechanisms. Given the multiplication of global actors involved in emergency response, the lessons learned in respect to the management of previous epidemics (H1N1, Zika, Ebola), the WHO should focus on preparedness and increasing coordination in response to health emergencies.

Stopping the current Covid-19 pandemic requires unprecedented measures. The WHO and its Member States need to step up, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, to enable timely and adequate supply, to all and on an equal basis, of diagnostics, treatments and vaccines for Covid-19 as essential public goods. It is time to prove that, beyond solemn declarations, the international community can work together to ensure that nobody is left behind. Financing is key but not the only area of critical gap. Measures that need to be taken include:

- Harness the R&D and manufacturing capabilities in developing countries
- Actively promote technology transfer and the sharing of technologies and know-how including through the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP)



International Environment House 2
Chemin de Balexert 7-9
POB 228, 1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel.: +41(0)22 791 80 50
E-mail: south@southcentre.int
Web Site: www.southcentre.int

- Support the proposal for a temporary waiver to certain provisions of the WTO TRIPS Agreement
- Assist countries to use the TRIPS flexibilities including Article 73(b).