



STATEMENT BY CARLOS M. CORREA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTH CENTRE, TO THE MEETING OF THE NAM HEALTH MINISTERS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 75TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY, MAY 20, 2022

Excellencies,

I thank, on behalf of the South Centre, the Chairmanship of NAM for the invitation to participate once again in the NAM Health Ministers' meeting on the occasion of the 75th World Health Assembly.

The South Centre has closely followed issues concerning access to medicines and the work of the WHO over the years. In the last couple of years, it has provided analyses and advice in connection with the COVID-19 crisis that has so severely affected the members of NAM.

Such analyses have shown, on the one hand, that solidarity has been proclaimed but not practiced by developed countries, leading to a major inequality in the response to COVID-19, notably in relation to access to vaccines.

The refusal by those countries to promptly waive obligations under the TRIPS Agreement to expand the manufacturing capacity of vaccines is just a manifestation of that lack of solidarity.

On the other hand, however, the COVID-19 crisis has confirmed the increasing importance of South-South Cooperation (SSC), through the supply and donation of vaccines and other products, including by countries who were not their direct producers.

It will be important that the WHA recognizes the role of SSC in promoting public health and that the agency mainstreams SSC in its activities, like other UN agencies have done.

We warmly welcome the report on sustainable financing with the aim of restoring the public character of the WHO by progressively increasing the regular budget over the next 7 years. This is something that the South Centre has been calling for a long time. We are very glad that this development has taken place under the leadership of Dr. Tedros, the first Director-General from Africa.

But an increase in the financial resources, while critical, will not allow the WHO to address the global public health problems if its role as the global health agency is not consolidated. This requires new tools and a strengthened authority to act.

The shortcomings in the governance of COVAX provides just an example of a situation that needs to be remedied. The public health implications of climate change and food insecurity also call for new tools to implement a One Health approach.

The review of the International Health Regulations provides an opportunity to develop such new tools.

This is also the case of the negotiations of a new instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

We hope that these negotiations, with the full and equitable participation of developing countries, be carried out in the context of article 19 of the WHO Constitution. We also hope that the outcomes of medical R&D be considered global public goods, and that financial resources are made available to support health systems in developing countries, including to expand their manufacturing capacity of vaccines and other products.

The South Centre will continue to interact with the Members of NAM and support them in engaging in debates and negotiations on these matters.