



Opening Statement of the South Centre to the Seventy-Sixth World Health Assembly 22 May 2023

The South Centre, the intergovernmental organization of developing countries, appreciates the opportunity to address this World Health Assembly (WHA).

This Assembly will take many important decisions.

The proposed programme budget for 2024–2025 incorporates a 20 per cent increase of Member States' assessed contributions. The Assembly will also consider new ways to increase financing for the growing work of the World Health Organization (WHO). The Assembly should agree to a plan for the sustainable financing of the organization while preserving its public character. The current overdependence on extra-budgetary resources needs to be remedied. The actions by the WHO must be led by global public health priorities and not by the preferences or influence of its major donors.

The approval of the resolutions on increasing medical oxygen supplies and capacity for diagnostics, and the global strategy on infection prevention and control, as well as strengthening clinical trials, are critical towards improving preparedness and response to future pandemics. The progress on several important resolutions will also be reviewed, in areas such as antimicrobial resistance, local production capacities, and digital health. Renewed commitment is vital to achieve progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals including health targets for achieving universal health coverage, elimination of tuberculosis (TB) and addressing neglected tropical diseases, among others. This will require increased investments and solidarity with developing countries.

The WHA will also consider the status of the three related Member State-led processes to strengthen collective capacities to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from pandemics: the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement, or international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response; the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR); and the High-level meeting of Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response by the United Nations General Assembly. The work of these bodies must be coherent and deliver on equitable access to vaccines, medicines, diagnostics and other necessary tools. It is vital to establish a new multilaterally governed mechanism for the equitable distribution of vaccines and strengthened regional production capacities, that is not a mere reformulation of

COVAX, and to agree to mechanisms to overcome the rigidities of the international intellectual property regime, and share clinical information and technology. An essential element must be the adoption of a fair system for sharing the benefits derived from the utilization of pathogen information under the international regime on access to genetic resources.

We thank you for your time.