



South Centre Statement to the High Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response

20 September 2023

The South Centre is the intergovernmental organisation of developing countries with 55 members.

The UN HLMs on health have helped drive the highest level of political commitment to key global health issues. The HLD on PPR today underplays the seriousness of the crisis the world experienced with the Covid-19 pandemic and fails to provide the level of political support and guidance to the critical negotiations taking place in Geneva for an international instrument and amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005).

The HLD affirms that pandemics call for timely, urgent and continued leadership, global solidarity, multilateral commitment and cooperation among Member States and with relevant United Nations entities and other relevant international organizations, to implement robust global, regional, national and local actions, driven by equity and the respect for human rights, to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

However, the urgency in this statement is not echoed with strong and concrete commitments in the HLD. An opportunity has been missed.

We appear to be forgetting already the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic and others before. Developing countries will be again disproportionately impacted, while the global response cannot be effective without effective action by all, and special attention to the most vulnerable contexts and populations.

It is regrettable that the HLD does not provide any guidance towards ensuring the timely, sustainable and equitable access to affordable pandemic-related products, including vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and for concrete mechanisms to ensure sustainable financing of PPR.

In order to promote increased access, the UN system needs to move beyond “reaffirming” the flexibilities in the intellectual property system to call for countries to make full use of their policy space to address any intellectual property barriers, both

for advancing local R&D and manufacturing capacities and for accelerating access during pandemic times.

The HLD refers to a commitment to “a stronger and transparent partnership between the public and the private sectors as well as academia” towards public health-driven research and development that is needs-driven and evidenced based. There is a need for governments to commit to international cooperation for financing R&D and coordination in the procurement of pandemic related products. There should be transparency in contractual terms with the private sector for funding R&D and the procurement of pandemic-related products and these should include terms for promoting equity and transfer of technology and know-how on preferential terms to developing countries to scale up production during pandemic times. Transparency will help ensure a fair return on public financing and that developing countries are not at the end of the line for access.

We hope that the negotiations of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body for a pandemic instrument and the negotiations of the Working Group on International Health Regulations Amendments (2005) will be ambitious in building the blocks for strengthened capacities for PPR in all countries, with a focus on equity.

The South Centre will continue to support developing countries in these processes and seek to promote constructive dialogue with other UN members and stakeholders.