

STATEMENT FOR THE G20 HEALTH MINISTERS MEETING, 19 APRIL 2020

Intervention by Dr Philippe Duneton, Executive Director a.i., Unitaid

Your Excellencies, Mr. Chairman Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al-Rabiah, Honorable Ministers, dear colleagues, I want to thank the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for organizing this meeting and for the invitation to Unitaid to participate at this Ministerial G20 event.

Unitaid warmly welcomes the efforts of G20 health ministers to promote an ambitious and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, as Executive Director of Unitaid, I want to start by stressing my support for the common vision expressed by my colleagues of Gavi and The Global Fund. We certainly need vaccines against COVID-19, but they will not be ready for many months. We also need basic science to better understand how to defeat this virus. And right now, at least as soon as possible, we need new treatments and better and faster diagnostics to fight it, until we can control the coronavirus by a vaccine. And we need solutions that work in low- and middle income countries, those with weaker public health systems.

Unitaid is ready to take its part and contribute to the development of new tests and medicines that can prevent and treat the coronavirus. Unitaid's core business is to help to select and develop innovation global health, and lead access to scale. We work in partnership, with the World Health Organization, with academia in the North and the South, product development partnerships, industry, the Global Fund, UN partners, US bilateral donors and other organizations, private foundations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, non-governmental organizations, civil society, communities and countries.

We do this to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; and now we have to do that against COVID-19.

Secondly, to succeed we have also to ensure equitable access to these new tools. We must create the conditions to make sure that who need them, can access them in a timely manner. These conditions must be discussed and defined at the start of the product development phase. Public money should lead to public commitments from industry; these tools have to be global goods, and not reserved to the richest countries. Global threats need global solutions.

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We believe is not the time to create new institutions, but rather to leverage the experience and competence of existing organisations to ensure an efficient coordination of the response.

Unitaid is currently investing in diagnostics, treatment and triage tools for respiratory diseases in support to the global fight against COVID-19 in strong collaboration with WHO and partners. Tools which are adapted and affordable for low and middle-income countries. For this, I would like to thank the countries that are currently supporting Unitaid: Brazil, Chile, France, Republic of Korea, Norway, Spain, UK, and also Japan and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Thirdly, and finally, we have acquired specific know-how to address quality, price and supply and to work and negotiate with industry, including on voluntary licencing together with the Medicines Patent Pool, created and funded by Unitaid.

Billions of treatments and tests are required to combat this pandemic. They need to be effective, safe and available. With the Medicines Patent Pool, and also supported by WHO, we are working on the operational conditions for a global voluntary pooling mechanism for COVID-19 technologies. This needs to be supported also by the Leaders of the G20 with other mechanisms to face the challenges to access.

We commend the G20 leadership and vision in the fight against COVID-19. Unitaid stands ready to support G20 countries and other governments in this global challenge and serve the people in need.

Thank you.

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