

World Health Organization (WHO)

Regional Committee for Europe, 70th Session

Virtual Session 14-15 September 2020

Re: Matters arising from resolutions and decisions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board

Stichting Health Action International welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussions of the 70th Regional Committee for Europe of the World Health Organization (WHO).

We wish to add our voice to the many that have commended the role of WHO in articulating a global response to COVID-19 by harnessing resources and coordinating international efforts, as set out in Resolution WHA73.1.

We particularly commend the formation of mechanisms, such as the COVID-19 Technologies Access Pool (C-TAP), to share intellectual property, know-how and other relevant data to facilitate the development, licensing and manufacturing of therapeutics, vaccines, and diagnostics for COVID-19. We recognise the high level of support for participation among Member States and other stakeholders, including pharmaceutical companies.

We must express our dismay at the role played by a few governments and some economic blocs in the procurement of potential vaccines through closed-door deals. This will contribute to serious geographical imbalances—including between countries in the European region—in access to vaccines and therapeutics. This is not acceptable and must be condemned in the strongest terms. Such shortsighted actions serve to encourage vaccine nationalism and vaccine hoarding, and weaken global efforts to achieve universal access, as embodied by Gavi's COVAX facility.

Transparency, accountability, and effective participation of civil society are the key elements for a successful strategy of containment and eradication of COVID-19. There can be no shortcuts in the regulatory process, nor limitations to civil society engagement. We will remain supportive to all constructive efforts for truly global dialogue and vigilant against attempts to put the interest of a few before the welfare of the many.