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Press Release

Coalition of International NGOs call for Equitable access for vaccines and treatment during COVID-19 pandemic

Around the world, governments are struggling to find ways to work together and control the spread of COVID-19. The virus does not recognize national boundaries. Rather, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated long-standing health disparities between and within countries born from social, economic, and political inequity. This crisis has challenged the global resilience of our health and long-term care systems and workforce. The *World Health Organization* released a call to action through their ‘Vaccine Equity Declaration’, which implores leaders to prioritize vaccine equity. Many organizations have taken important steps to spread awareness about COVID-19 vaccine equity and mobilize their members to respond. This is not enough. To move forward, there must be a greater global effort to foster collaboration between cross-national organizations and innovate solutions that leave no one behind.

On February 11, 2021, the World Federation of Public Health Associations hosted a historic meeting to initiate a coalition amongst leaders from international NGOs who share a common interest in equitable access for vaccines and treatment during COVID-19.

The organizations agreed to work together to build and sustain equity in global public health through increased advocacy for social protection and social development in vulnerable communities. Moreover, leaders expressed the need for an environmentally conscious and safe way to develop, distribute, and deliver vaccines, as this will also help reduce inequity following the pandemic by ensuring we do not exacerbate adverse climate effects. The Coalition is committed to engaging with other organizations, governments, and key stakeholders to achieve a coordinated response to the pandemic. The organizations will dedicate themselves to continue compiling resources, sharing evidence-based best practices, and using their collective voice to advocate for those who are disproportionately harmed by the pandemic, including chronically ill patients, individuals lacking access to health care services and medication, and marginalized communities.

Therefore, together we call on the World Health Assembly, the G20, every government, and all organizations that engage in public health, social policy, and advocacy to make the ethical choice now for the health and the economic well-being of all populations globally, especially the most vulnerable — leaving no one behind.

We call on all of these actors to work together to:

- Guarantee more and equitable access to vaccines
- Increase the health care, public health, and social protection workforce
- Challenge uncoordinated social, economic, and health system dynamics to maximize vaccine production, distribution, and uptake
- Address the national and international spending priorities during the pandemic
- Guarantee an environmentally and economically sustainable and equitable production and distribution of the vaccines
- Engage all groups in society, including youth and young professionals, key stakeholders, and health professionals in the decision-making process and implementation
- Engage with civil societies, patient organizations, and the broader public across diverse communities to address communication, including risk communication, tackling misinformation and combatting hesitancy, on every level

Overall, we believe that this growing Coalition has immense potential to strengthen our individual and collective responses to inequity, which like the virus itself, works beyond national borders both during the pandemic and in the years of recovery to follow. We are keen to begin this important work, and we look forward to contributing to and sharing our joint initiatives across our extensive networks.

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Signed by:

Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region

Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work

FDI World Dental Federation

Healthcare Without Harm

International Alliance of Patients' Organizations

International Council of Nurses

International Federation on Ageing

International Federation of Environmental Health

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations

International Federation of Social Workers

International Hospital Federation

International Pharmaceutical Federation

International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War

International Veterinary Students' Association

The European Forum for Primary Care

The Global Ageing Network

Union for International Cancer Control

WHO Collaborating Centre on Family Medicine and Primary Health Care - Ghent University

World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine

World Federation of Public Health Associations

World Heart Federation

World Organization of Family Doctors

World Patients Alliance

World Physiotherapy