



**Concept Note of the Side Event of the 70<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**  
**on**  
**The Impact of the Recommendations of United Nations Secretary-General's**  
**High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for**  
**Sustainable Development**

**24 May 2017**

**Background**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda, SDGs) was adopted in 2015 by 193 Member States of the United Nations. The need to expand access to medicines and health products is highlighted in the SDGs more specifically in SDG 3 and in many other SDG targets. Access to health products will be a key for countries to progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Access to essential medicines and health products is a pivotal WHO leadership priority with a core focus to increase access to essential, quality, safe, effective and affordable medical products (medicines, vaccines, medical devices and diagnostics). According to Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines (UNHLP), United Nations General Assembly should convene a Special Session, no later than 2018, to agree on strategies and an accountability framework that will accelerate efforts towards promoting health technology innovation and ensuring access.

Specific targets include the commitment to achieve UHC and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all; supporting the research and development of vaccines and medicines for diseases that primarily affect developing countries and providing access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. SDGs are an important vehicle for realizing the right to health and the right to share in the benefits of scientific advancements, whose affirmation dates back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Constitution of the WHO. These rights are also enshrined in various other international treaties, declarations and national laws, including at least 115 national constitutions.

Shortly after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, announced the establishment of UNHLP in November 2015. The Panel was tasked with proposing solutions that can help boost research and development as well as access to health technologies, in a manner that ensures policy coherence between international human rights, specifically the right to health, trade and intellectual property rules and public health objectives. Following a process of extensive consultation, the report was released in September 2016 which has a simple and powerful message: no one should suffer because he or she can't afford medicines, diagnostics or vaccines. The UNHLP report has been welcomed by the UN Secretary-General, several UN Member States and civil society groups who have called for broader discussions on its findings and recommendations. It was included in a resolution of the UN General Assembly in December 2016 as well as a resolution of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The Report's recommendations are being further discussed at the HRC and WTO TRIPS Council.

The UNHLP report will be discussed by the World Health Assembly (WHA) under the Agenda item 13.1: The global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines.

Achieving these global goals which emphasizes health and well-being for all, will require reconciling the need for greater investment in innovation, services, and medicines, with the high costs of health technologies that are currently burdening rich and poor countries alike. In addition, the lack of new tools to tackle health problems like disease outbreaks and antimicrobial resistance is a growing problem. Catalyzing innovation, especially for rare diseases, diseases of the poor, and the development of new antibiotics has proven very difficult without market incentives.

According to the UNHLP report, the world must take bold new approaches for ensuring access so that all people can benefit from the medical advances that have dramatically improved the lives of millions around the world in the last century. The Panel views transparency as a core component needed to hold all stakeholders responsible for the impact of their actions on innovation and access. The Report noted with concern, reports of governments being subjected to undue political and economic pressure to forgo the use of TRIPS flexibilities and advocated continued commitment to Doha Declaration.

## **Objectives**

The side event proposes a discussion for engagement at global, regional and national levels in the above context in line with the 2030 SDG Agenda.

This event will also allow participants to exchange perspectives and views on the recommendations made by the UNHLP in its report to the Member States and observers of the WHO, the WHO Secretariat and all stakeholders.

A discussion on these issues at WHA 2017 is timely in view of the global engagement on the 2030 SDG Agenda, role of medical products to achieve access and health outcomes, and the report recommendations including for a global engagement in 2018.

## **Expected Outcomes**

1. Adoption of a Joint Declaration.
2. Follow up and next steps.