

## Addressing the global shortage of medicines and vaccines

The Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on addressing the global shortages of medicines, and the safety and accessibility of children's medication;<sup>1</sup>

Recalling the Health Assembly resolutions WHA67.22 (2014) on access to essential medicines, WHA60.20 (2007) on better medicines for children, WHA67.20 (2014) on regulatory system strengthening, WHA67.21 (2014) access to biotherapeutic products, including similar biotherapeutic products, and ensuring their quality, safety and efficacy, WHA61.21 (2008) on global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property, WHA65.19 (2012) on substandard/spurious/falsely-labelled/falsified/counterfeit medical products, WHA65.17 (2012) on the global vaccine action plan, WHA68.7 (2015) on the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance, WHA67.25 (2014) on antimicrobial resistance, WHA64.9 (2011) on sustainable health financing structures and universal coverage, and Human Rights Council resolution RES/12/24 (2009) on access to medicine in the context of the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

Noting with particular concern that, for millions of people, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including access to medicines, remains a distant goal, that especially for children and those living in poverty, the likelihood of achieving this goal is becoming increasingly remote;

Recognizing that the continuous supply of quality, safe, effective and affordable medicines is one of the building blocks of every well-functioning health system, which requires a reliable supply chain; and noting reports of global medicines shortages and stockouts that also infringe upon the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as envisaged by the WHO Constitution, that undermine the attainment of public health prevention and treatment goals and that threaten governments' ability to scale up services towards achieving universal health coverage as well as their ability to adequately respond to outbreaks and health emergencies;

Recalling Goal 3, target 3.8 of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which includes the commitment to achieve universal health coverage, financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable medicines and vaccines for all;

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<sup>1</sup> Document A69/42.

Acknowledging that the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development supports the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and noncommunicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, to provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all;<sup>1</sup>

Noting that the challenges related to medicines shortages affect access to medicines; that they are complex and widespread, and increasing in frequency; that they affect citizens, procurement agencies and countries at every level of development; and that there is insufficient information to determine the magnitude and specific characteristics of the problem;

Noting also that the implications of these shortages in the case of infectious diseases impact public health, as a shortage/stockout of antibiotics, antituberculosis drugs, antiretrovirals, antimalarials, antiparasitic drugs and medicines for neglected tropical diseases and vaccines may result in the spread of infection beyond the individual patient;

Considering that there is a need for improved international collaboration on the management of shortages of medicines,

1. URGES Member States:<sup>2</sup>

to develop strategies that may be used to forecast, avert or reduce shortages/stockouts, in accordance with national priorities and contexts, including:

- (a) to implement effective notification systems that allow remedial measures to avoid medicines and vaccines shortages;
- (b) to ensure that best practices for medicines and vaccines procurement, distribution and contract management processes are in place to mitigate the risk of shortages;
- (c) to develop and/or strengthen systems that are capable of monitoring medicine and vaccine supply, demand, availability and of alerting procurement departments to possible medicine and vaccine availability problems;
- (d) to strengthen institutional capacity to ensure sound financial management of procurement systems, to prevent funding shortfalls for medicines;
- (e) to prioritize, in the case of shortages, the health needs of the most affected groups and to ensure these groups have timely access to medicines;
- (f) to advance, gradually, regional and international cooperation in support of national notification systems including, but not limited to, sharing of best practices, training for human capacity building through regional and subregional structures where necessary;

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (Goal 3, target 3.b).

<sup>2</sup> And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

2. CALLS upon manufacturers, wholesalers, global, and regional procurement agencies and other relevant stakeholders to contribute to global efforts to address the challenges of medicines and vaccines shortages, including through participation in notification systems;
3. REQUESTS the Director-General:
  - (1) to develop technical definitions, as needed, for medicines and vaccines shortages and stockouts, taking due account of access and affordability in consultation with Member State experts in keeping with WHO-established processes, and to submit a report on the definitions to the Seventieth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board;
  - (2) to develop an assessment of the magnitude and nature of the problem of shortages of medicines and vaccines;
  - (3) to support Member States in addressing the global challenges of medicines and vaccines shortages by developing a global medicine shortage notification system that would include information to better detect and understand the causes of medicines shortages;
  - (4) to report on progress on, and outcomes of, the implementation of this resolution to the Seventy-first World Health Assembly.

Eighth plenary meeting, 28 May 2016  
A69/VR/8

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