FOREIGN POLICY AND GLOBAL HEALTH JOINT MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
COVID-19: TURNING THIS UNPRECEDEDENTED CRISIS INTO AN OPPORTUNITY TO
ACHIEVE AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

1. We, the Ministers of Health of the Foreign Policy and Global Health (FPGH) Initiative, comprising Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa, and Thailand, have met on the sidelines of the virtual 73rd World Health Assembly;

2. We express deep condolences and sympathies for those affected by COVID-19 and the need for a global, coordinated, coherent, transparent and accountable response based on unity, solidarity and multilateral cooperation;

3. We express our appreciation to frontline health workers and health professionals for their invaluable efforts in the COVID-19 response;

4. We recall the Oslo Declaration in 2007 entitled “Global health: a pressing foreign policy issue of our time” which stresses the importance of multilateralism in addressing global health challenges in today's era of globalization and interdependence;

5. We reaffirm our commitment to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage by 2030, leaving no one behind, and to fully implement the International Health Regulations (2005);

6. We acknowledge that the current pandemic highlights the need for strong health systems which are central to effective emergency preparedness; and further that investments in health are key to advancing prosperity, development and alleviating poverty;

7. We recall the constitutional mandate of WHO to act, inter alia, as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, and acknowledge its key leadership role within the broader UN response to the COVID-19 pandemic;

8. We acknowledge the contributions of other international organizations and relevant actors in responding to COVID-19 and its wider socio-economic impacts, in particular increased domestic violence, poverty, unemployment and food insecurity;

9. We underline the primary responsibility of governments to adopt and implement responses to the COVID-19 pandemic that are specific to their national context, as well as for mobilizing the necessary resources to do so, while recognizing that a successful international response necessitates coordinated international efforts to mobilize financial resources and development cooperation for countries in greatest need;

10. We recognize that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being;

11. We emphasize the need to fully respect human rights and take into account social determinants of health in the development of plans and strategies to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups and people in
vulnerable situations, including those in fragile and humanitarian settings, with a view to eliminating all forms of stigma, discrimination, racism or xenophobia;

12. We reaffirm the right to use, to the fullest extent, the provisions contained in the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for the protection of public health and to promote access to quality, safe, effective and affordable essential medicines, vaccines, and health technologies;

13. We underscore that equitable access to quality, safe, effective and affordable essential medicine, vaccines, and health technologies relevant to COVID-19 is a global priority in tackling the pandemic;

14. We welcome the theme of FPGH 2020 of “Affordable Health Care for All”, and its importance in the response to the COVID-19 as well as our common efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage by 2030, and commit to:

- Work in solidarity with the international community to respond to COVID-19 and strengthen global preparedness and the resilience of national health systems;

- Strengthen integrated surveillance, laboratory and other IHR core capacities and capabilities, a means to provide timely response to health emergencies,

- Strengthen national health systems with a focus on primary health care, including through providing equitable access to a comprehensive range of services and care, that are people-centered, age- and gender-responsive, quality, safe, integrated, accessible, available and affordable; which contribute to the health and well-being of all, including newborn, child and maternal health, mental health, and through prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, including HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, as in SDGs 3.7 and 5.6;

- Build trust between the authorities and the public, by promoting education, engagement and empowerment of populations and communities, and by providing up-to-date, transparent and evidence-based information, while fully protecting human rights, including the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy and protection of personal data;

- Further engage communities in providing cost-effective quality health care and services at the subnational level through prevention and detection activities to promote hygienic practices, and personal protective behaviour, as well as by involving them in the development of preparedness and mitigation strategies to the pandemic;

- Scale up efforts to promote the recruitment and retention of competent, skilled and motivated health workers and encourage incentives to secure the equitable distribution of qualified health workers especially in rural, hard-to-reach and underserved areas and in fields with high demands for services, including by providing decent and safe working conditions and appropriate remuneration for health workers working in these areas, while taking into account the principle of the WHO Global Code for Recruitment of Health Personnel;

- Explore innovative ways to address supply chain challenges, *inter alia*, through local production and as appropriate, through joint production and distribution schemes, including with the private sector, to ensure equitable access to quality, safe, effective, and affordable essential medicines, vaccines and health technologies, where they are most needed;
- Promote the availability of and the equitable access to quality, safe, effective, and affordable essential medicines, vaccines and health technologies, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of all countries to use to the fullest extent the provisions in the TRIPS Agreement regarding flexibilities to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all, while noting the need for appropriate incentives in the development of new health products;

- Encourage the establishment of new and use of existing mechanisms, such as the Medicines Patent Pool, for the voluntary pooling of patents or other intellectual property rights and data related to medicines, vaccines, and other health technologies and encourage licensing on reasonable terms;

- Increase sustainable investment and cooperation in research and development for quality, effective, safe, affordable and essential medicines, vaccines and other health technologies by, among others, fostering multi-stakeholder partnership and coordination;

- Support initiatives, such as the ACT Accelerator Initiative, to ensure the availability and equitable access to quality, effective, safe and affordable essential medicines, vaccines, and health technologies, *inter alia* through accelerating the development and the scaling up of their production;

- Share experiences and knowledge from our response to the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to turning the crisis into an opportunity to achieve affordable health care for all.

18 May 2020