



WORLD HEALTH DAY DECLARATION

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY NEEDS TO PLAY AT FULL SPEED TO ENSURE ACCESS TO COVID-19 VACCINES

This year's World Health Day is placed under the motto "Building a fairer, healthier world". On this occasion, the International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies (AIM), gathering health mutuals, health insurance funds and other not-for-profit healthcare payers from three regions in the world, calls: for affordability, accessibility and international solidarity in vaccines supply, for a proper roll-out of vaccines across the world as well as for a reflection on intellectual property protection to ensure universal access to products. These priorities must be addressed under the wider context of the Sustainable Development Goal of universal health coverage including access to quality essential health care services. These should be at the core of the future international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response that Charles Michel and world leaders advocated for in their recent Op-ed.

“ This year's World Health Day marks a year after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the world still struggles with the virus, we welcome the fast development and approval of number of vaccines. However, the roll-out and production scale-up of vaccines is the challenge of today, to make sure that everyone has access to the long-awaited vaccines. Under the principle that 'no one is safe unless everyone is safe', we also need to make sure that everyone has access to medicines, without inequities between and within countries. AIM and its members call for more international solidarity so that unmet needs are filled across the world. ”



Loek Caubo, AIM President

Innovative partnerships to scale up production of vaccines and boost inoculation

COVID-19 is still causing significant damage in healthcare systems, societies and economies around the world. With a global death toll nearing 3 million deaths since the start of the pandemic, increasing inequalities (economic, geographical, gender-based,...), the increased circulation of variants and COVID-19 fatigue in societies, time is of essence to limit future harm. The availability and supply of COVID-19 vaccines and their roll-out therefore need to remain the absolute priority for national, regional and international agendas. The discovery and marketing of a number of COVID-19 vaccines in under a year is a significant feat. Now, innovative partnerships are needed to scale-up their production, including patent owners giving licensing rights to competitors who also command significant production lines. We need more production capacity across the globe to accelerate population inoculation, as well as transparent, balanced communication about vaccines effectiveness.

Stronger commitments to ensure access, availability and affordability globally

The question of affordability and accessibility is critical. Under the principle that 'no one is safe unless everyone is safe', we need to make sure that everyone has access to medicines, without inequities between and within countries. Purchase of doses has been secured through Advance Purchase Agreements in the European Union but not all countries have access globally. In Africa and Latin America, access depends largely on deliveries made under the COVAX Facility. COVAX's work is much-needed, but its goal to vaccinate at least 20% of the population in the recipient countries is insufficient to achieve herd immunity. We need stronger commitments from wealthier countries in this respect. Governments should consider increasing the vaccination targets under COVAX, but can also commit to share excess doses with the COVAX Facility.

Discussing flexibilities in the intellectual property framework to increase access

There is today a discussion taking place in the World Trade Organization on waiving intellectual protection rights in order to improve affordability and access to COVID-19 vaccines. This discussion deserves a specific attention as long-term solutions must be found for sustainable access to COVID-19 vaccines that would fulfil existing unmet needs. Today, access to COVID-19 vaccines in large parts of the world is reliant on donations and ad-hoc solutions brought about by wealthier countries, as well as bilateral arrangements. While they help recovery and response, they likely will not help fulfil all unmet needs. A smart waiver of IP rules within trade law, coupled with technology transfer to help with actual manufacturing as close to local needs as possible, be it for the duration of the pandemic, or for longer, could help bring more sustainable solutions to the rampant damages of COVID-19.

This declaration is destined to governments, as well as regional and international organisations

Brussels, 7 April 2021

AIM (International Association of Mutual Benefit Societies) is the largest international umbrella organisation of non-profit healthcare payers. Through its 55 members from 28 countries, AIM provides health coverage to around 240 million people in the world and almost 200 million people in Europe through compulsory and/or complementary health insurance. AIM strives to defend the access to healthcare for all through solidarity based and not-for profit health insurance. Its mission is to provide a platform for members to exchange on common issues and to represent their interests and values towards the European and international Institutions.



AIM

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