

WHO Headquarters
Avenue Appia 20
1202 Geneva

May 17, 2018

Dear Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus:

We, the undersigned five organizations, representing a diverse group of stakeholders across the European continent, urge you to use the upcoming 71st World Health Assembly (WHA) to reaffirm your commitment to supporting the systems of innovation needed to improve global health.

Global health policy is at a crossroad of once-unthinkable medical therapies, devices, and drugs that cannot just treat but even cure maladies affecting the world. At the same time, a few countries would undo the progress of the last 70 years by using the World Health Organization (WHO) to undermine the intellectual property protections and market incentives that have spurred recent medical breakthroughs. The WHO's access to medicines agenda has been particularly problematic in recent years, with some countries pushing divisive policies on patents and trying to marginalize private sector stakeholders.

As leading European organizations, we strongly recommend embracing policies that harness the resources and talent of the private sector to help achieve health outcomes. In our experience, market incentives and intellectual property protections can be the catalysts for positive change. History has shown that these forces can lift entire societies out of abject poverty, bring much-needed modernizations to the world at a global scale, and provide life-saving technologies and innovations we could hardly imagine.

This WHA is a critical moment for global health leaders to set priorities for the WHO and demonstrate a commitment to supporting its vital work. We encourage you to use this opportunity to avoid polarizing arguments that pit country versus country and governments versus the private sector. Instead, you have a chance to use the WHA to find common ground and bring together all parties, including the private sector, to find practical solutions.

More specifically, the WHO should show leadership by rejecting any recommendations of the failed 2016 United National High-Level Panel (UNHLP) Access to Medicines report. Despite never being endorsed by any United Nations body and running contrary to the Sustainable Development Goal of multi-sector partnerships, the report and its flawed recommendations continue to resurface at the WHO. The UNHLP report cannot rightly serve as the starting point for any dialogue, as its implementation would break the cycle of innovation that has saved countless lives.

Europe was the home to the 14th century Renaissance, in which the arts and sciences flourished. Humanity's collective knowledge grew exponentially in this time of invention and innovation. Today, Europe is living in a medical renaissance. More than 7,000 medicines are in development with tens of billions of Euros invested in private sector research and development every year. Our continent can be home to the next generation of therapies and cures, but only if global bodies like the WHO commit themselves to meaningful partnership with the private sector.

Sincerely,

Pietro Paganini
President, Competere

Giacomo Bandini
Director, Campagne Liberali

Philip Stevens
Managing Director, Geneva Network

Raffaello Morelli
Director, For Free Choice

Daniele Capezzone
Secretary General, New Direction Italia

cc: Director-General Dr. Francis Gurry, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
Secretary-General António Guterres, United Nations (UN)