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From:

Co-Chairs, G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response
Chair, WHO Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development
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To:

G20 Leaders
G20 Health Ministers and Finance Ministers

The G20 Must Lead: Bringing Health and Finance Together to Ensure a Safer World

We write to you respectfully, days from the Leaders' Summit.

In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis, the G20 established the Financial Stability Board to avoid a repeat of such disaster. **It is now critical in the face of a pandemic causing the largest human and economic catastrophe since the Second World War that the G20 agrees on the global mechanisms needed to prevent major health threats from recurring.**

It is urgent to reach agreement on these new global mechanisms. We urge that if it is not possible to do so by the coming Summit, Leaders create the conditions to bridge differences pragmatically and achieve consensus by early 2022 at latest.

Pandemics and many other disease outbreaks are man-made; they derive from unsustainable activities, in breach of the Sustainable Development Goals. The challenge requires a comprehensive response. It is of a scale that cannot be addressed through incremental adjustments to existing institutions and mechanisms, which have failed in the current pandemic. We must invest substantially more collectively and proactively, and introduce a proper system of financial governance to make this possible.

The global system of pandemic prevention and preparedness is complex, fragmented, underfunded and greatly inequitable, as has been pointed out by the WHO and each of the high-level international reviews¹ since the current crisis broke out. It requires urgent bolstering. **We cannot shift these actions to the future, or wait once again for the pandemic to fade from memory once the worst is over. The next pandemic could come at any time, and we are unprepared. It may even strike while the world still grapples with COVID-19.**

Both the G20 High Level Independent Panel and the WHO Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development, whose Chairs are co-signatories to this letter, had

¹ The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR) commissioned by the World Health Assembly, the G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, and the Pan-European Commission on Health and Sustainable Development convened by the WHO Regional Office for Europe.

proposed a **G20-Plus board to bring health and finance decision-makers together to strengthen financing of preparedness for global health threats and avoid future pandemics. Both panels emphasised the need for this G20-Plus board to be inclusive, bringing together both major financial contributors as well as developing countries and regions** including the African Union that require the greatest international support to invest in human security from such threats. Such a board will create a common understanding between Health and Finance Ministers on the plans and investments necessary, support the mobilisation of private and philanthropic capital, and place the interrelated challenges of achieving One Health and security from pandemics at the centre of national and international policy-making.

The WHO has supported the establishment of this G20-Plus board, to enable effective stewardship of financing of preparedness and response. The Board, providing a clear role for the WHO on the Board and as host for its Secretariat, will not dilute the key role of the organisation. It would in fact be a vital complement to global health governance at the World Health Assembly², and support any new WHO convention or other international legal instrument on pandemic preparedness and response³. Ultimately, it would provide strong support for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

We advocate that the proposed Board also identify the major gaps in prevention and preparedness and the priorities to be undertaken by a new multilateral financing mechanism for global health security. The G20 High Level Independent Panel had assessed after careful and extensive study and consultations that we need a strong layer of multilateral support on top of today's complex and siloed system of financing by individual organisations, largely dependent on discretionary bilateral and philanthropic aid. The new funding mechanism is critically needed to fund global public goods – including a network of national, regional and global surveillance of disease risks, and a global supply ecosystem to radically speed up supply of vaccines and other vital materials so as to avoid both the staggering inequalities of access that COVID-19 has revealed and prolonging a pandemic.

The Board will have to continually update its assessment of the gaps in global public goods for One Health and pandemic prevention and preparedness, as these will keep evolving – often unexpectedly – and correspondingly adjust the scale of international financing required. However, this continuous assessment does not determine whether we move ahead with a new multilateral financing mechanism to fix a system that is very clearly underfunded and fragmented. Even at \$10 billion per year, we will almost certainly be under-providing, not over-providing, for pandemic prevention and preparedness. It would also be affordable. Spread across countries on a fair and equitable basis, this will in most cases be about 0.02% of their GDPs. The new mechanism should also support efforts to catalyse private and philanthropic finance.

² The G20-Plus Board would also complement the proposal by the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR) for a Global Health Threats Council at the Heads of State / Heads of Government level at the United Nations. While a top-level political leadership Council would mobilise collective action and responsibility among all nations, the G20-Plus Board is critically needed to bring financing to global efforts for prevention and preparedness against global health threats, and ensure alignment between different sources of finance and the most effective use of funds.

³ A Member States Working Group at the WHO is evaluating the options for such an instrument, which had also been proposed by the IPPPR.

We must also emphasise that this new multilateral financing mechanism is not a substitute for strengthening funding for the WHO itself. Each of the major reviews in the last year had called for more reliable resourcing of the WHO, and this is being considered by the WHO Working Group on Sustainable Financing. Yet better funding of the WHO's operations is necessary but not sufficient. The WHO plays the central role, but is not a financing organisation for the rest of the system for global health security, which is also gravely underfunded.

G20 Leaders must agree that the discussion cannot end in stalemate, and there be serious consideration instead of how the new mechanisms needed should complement and strengthen existing institutions, in order to overcome the gaps laid bare by the various reviews. On the eve of the COP 26, synergies could be drawn with the work done on climate and nature-related finance.

We are already in injury time. We must act now to repair the deep and growing distrust of the global system, especially in the developing regions that have had little access to life-saving supplies. Failure to reverse this trust deficit will have lasting consequences. It will make it very difficult to address climate change and future pandemics, or other problems in a dangerous world.

Sincerely,

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