

# Joint statement of the Alliance for multilateralism

16 April 2020

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## We need strong global cooperation and solidarity to fight COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call for multilateralism. Trying to cope with the immediate devastating effects of the virus, nations have turned toward imposing unprecedented executive measures, including closing borders. However, a virus knows no borders. All countries are affected. We must remain united in our shared humanity. The fight against this global pandemic, which is taking so many lives and challenging our societies, requires more and enhanced international cooperation and worldwide solidarity.

Containing and countering this pandemic calls for a co-operative, transparent, science-based and coordinated global response. We are concerned by the serious threat to all countries, particularly developing and least developed countries, countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries, where health systems are less prepared, as well as the particular risk faced by refugees and displaced persons.

We realise that the pandemic poses a serious threat to the essential right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. At the same time, in a situation of emergency, it is of utmost importance to maintain principles of democracy and the rule of law. We call on all governments to strictly ensure that any measures taken to counter the pandemic must be necessary and proportionate, pursue legitimate purposes, be limited in time, non-discriminatory and respectful of international law, including human rights law. Adopting a gender-responsive approach will be essential. With respect to non-discriminatory policies, we support the statement of the High Commissioner for Human rights, issued on March 6, recalling that human dignity and rights should remain at the core of the response to the crisis, and that responses should be holistic and people-centric.

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated just how crucial multilateral institutions are to our collective health, prosperity, and security. We fully support the World Health Organization in leading the global public health response, as well as the efforts of the wider United Nations, the World Bank Group, and other international and regional

organizations as they come together in a coordinated, coherent whole to respond to the wider socio-economic impacts of the crisis.

We strongly support the appeal by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres for an immediate global ceasefire. It is time to stop armed conflict and immediately halt fighting and devote all our energy and resources to fighting the world's common challenge – the coronavirus. We express our gratitude to health and humanitarian workers for their indispensable role in saving lives and commit to preserve, and advocate for, the space they need to deliver on their life-saving mandate. We thank civil society leaders for their determination to protect the most vulnerable. We support efforts to urgently address the humanitarian dimension of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are ready to play our part in responding to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 by the United Nations. We commend the UN Secretary General for launching a COVID-19 response and recovery fund for low and middle-income countries to tackle the health emergency, address social and economic consequences of the crisis and assist in the recovery and support efforts to strengthen coordination and collaboration across response efforts.

**The health challenge:** The focus must now be on the most immediate medical, political and economic challenges raised by the pandemic. We support the United Nations' call for shared responsibility and global solidarity in response to the impacts of COVID-19, and especially the role of WHO in the coordination of the health response to the epidemic. We seek to ensure sufficient financing to address the pandemic, including strengthening of health systems globally. We support working towards a response that delivers universal access to treatment and vaccines, when they are ready. Fair and just distribution will be key. We propose to focus on the universal provision of an eventual treatment and a vaccine and recognize immunization against COVID-19 as a global public good.

**The financial challenge:** We will seek to ensure adequate financing to contain the pandemic and protect people, with particular attention to the most vulnerable. We commit, on a voluntary basis, to provide resources in support of the WHO's COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan, as well as the health organizations involved in identifying and scaling up the tools needed to fight the pandemic: the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness and Innovation (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, UNITAID and the Global Fund, and call upon all countries, international organizations, the private sector, philanthropies, and individuals to contribute to these efforts. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to assist those countries whose economies are most at risk due to the pandemic and to improve resilience.

**The information challenge:** Disinformation puts peoples' lives at risk and is an obstacle to effective public health responses. We call on all states to provide and promote accessible, timely and factual information, to continue to protect and promote access to free and independent media and to support the free exchange of reliable and

accurate information. We support the efforts of the WHO and internet intermediaries to step up efforts in detecting and addressing misinformation and prioritizing trustworthy information on their platforms. We commend journalists and other media workers on their work that serves to keep societies informed credibly, to protect the health of communities and to prevent false or misleading information. We express concern at the damage which can and has been done by the spreading of false or manipulated information intended to deliberately deceive, including disinformation about the virus outbreak and response. We need to push back disinformation and propaganda. Access to reliable information and to free and independent media is crucial to foster transparency and accountability, combat misinformation and contribute to public confidence and support for government efforts to combat the pandemic. We will work with public health authorities to ensure access to timely and accurate information. We are concerned by attempts to use this crisis to put in place undue restrictions or to deny societies critical information on the spread of the disease. We must work together to amplify evidence-based messaging.

**The prevention challenge:** We must also address the long-term consequences of this crisis. The world must prepare better for the next pandemic. We will lend our support to strengthening health systems globally, including through supporting the WHO, other UN agencies as well as other international health organizations. The COVID pandemic should be an opportunity to strengthen the global health security system. In order to reduce the risk of future pandemics we should promote the "One Health" approach as outlined by the WHO. We support efforts by the WHO to assess gaps with a view to enhancing pandemic preparedness and response, and further stress the urgency of ensuring a healthy environment, achieving universal health coverage, and promoting effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The multilateral system needs to adapt and reform to 'recover better'. We call upon the WHO, IMF, WBG and all relevant UN agencies and international health organizations to further step up coordination of their actions, including with the private sector, to support emerging and developing countries in facing the health, economic, and social shocks following the COVID-19 outbreak. We support the efforts of the WHO to assess gaps in pandemic preparedness with a view to establish a global initiative on pandemic preparedness and response.

**The economic challenge:** The continued efficient flow of medical supplies, agricultural products, and other goods and services across borders will be critical for effective crisis response, to help minimize global supply and demand shocks, and to enable timely economic recovery. We will therefore work to minimize disruptions to cross border trade and global supply chains, and taking only targeted, proportionate, transparent, and temporary emergency measures and only those consistent with our WTO obligations.

As we strive to 'recover better' our common roadmap remains the 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement. We welcome the unanimous adoption of UNGA resolution 74/270 on Global solidarity to fight the

coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) at the initiative of Ghana, Indonesia, Liechtenstein, Norway, Singapore and Switzerland.

Faced with the unprecedented challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we must all join forces to contain, counter and prevent its spread. The Alliance for Multilateralism is committed to support the UN, WHO, and other international organizations in their efforts toward this end. We are only as strong as the weakest link in the global health system. Only by building a more sustainable and resilient world through enhanced international cooperation can we overcome this threat to humanity.

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