

Declaration: We must accelerate vaccine equity for all health workers – now.

Health and care workers have been at the forefront of the pandemic response: often under protected and over exposed.

Women make up the vast majority of health care workers and it is thanks to their professionalism, bravery and dedication, often in the toughest of circumstances, that the global mortality rate from the virus is not higher. It is thanks also to their compassion and humanity that those we have lost have been treated with dignity in their final moments.

Due to unprecedented scientific efforts, vaccines are now being distributed in more than 70 countries across the world, with health workers in those places rightly among the first groups to receive them. In the majority of low- and middle-income countries, vaccination has not even started which is a catastrophe as hospitals fill up.

We must act swiftly to correct this injustice. Multiple variants are showing increased transmissibility and even resistance to the health tools needed to tackle this virus. The best way to end this pandemic, stop future variants and save lives is to limit the spread of the virus by vaccinating quickly and equitably, starting with health workers.

This is why the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has called all countries to start vaccinating health workers and those people at highest risk of COVID-19 in the first 100 days of 2021.

This is possible if leaders make it a priority. Through the COVAX Facility and the [COVID-19 technology access pool](#) (C-TAP) international mechanisms already exist to share know-how, scale up manufacturing and rollout of vaccines quickly and equitably. COVAX, made up of more than 190 countries and economies, has secured 2 billion doses of vaccines in 2021, which will start to be rolled out this month.

To this end, we, the undersigned organisations and individuals, call on global, national and local leaders to accelerate the equitable rollout of vaccines in every country, starting with health workers and those at highest risk for COVID-19. This includes scaling up vaccine manufacturing and rejecting vaccine nationalism at every turn.

We call specifically for:

- **World leaders** to increase contributions to the COVAX facility and to share doses with COVAX in parallel with national vaccine roll out.
- **Vaccine manufacturers** to share know how with C-TAP to scale up vaccine manufacturing and dramatically increase the global supply of vaccines for the coming years. Furthermore, we ask for leaders to prioritize supplying to COVAX over new bilateral deals.
- **Regulatory bodies** to accelerate approval processes in a safe and deliberate way.
- **Ministries of Health** to work with WHO and others to invest in and ready their primary health care systems for distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to their health workers and to develop data systems on vaccine supply, distribution and uptake,

including sex and age disaggregated and sub-national data, to drive delivery, equality and impact.

- **All governments** to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines are distributed free at the point of care and without risk of financial hardship, starting with health workers and those people at greatest risk of COVID-19, and to place affected communities, essential workers, and gender equality at the center of decision-making.

Distributing COVID-19 vaccines quickly and equitably is essential to end this pandemic, restart our economies and begin to tackle the other great challenges of our time, like food insecurity, inequality and the climate crisis.

Health must be foundational to all development in the post-COVID world and investing in primary health care systems will be key to ending this pandemic, preparing for the next one and delivering on the vision of health for all.

People around the world—including the health workers who have carried us through this crisis on their backs—are counting on leaders to do what is right and smart at this pivotal moment. History will judge us harshly if we fail.

In the Year of the Health and Care Worker, we must come together to protect and invest in the people who protect us all, no matter where they live.

Signed by: