

STOPAIDS. UNITING UK VOICES ON THE GLOBAL RESPONSE

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
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Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as a global group of civil society organisations and public health advocates to express our deep concerns that the recently announced Pandemic Preparedness Partnership risks entrenching the inequity in vaccine allocation in the Covid-19 pandemic and for future emerging diseases. We urge you, in your Presidency of the G7, to immediately change track.

Although it is framed as a 'new global partnership launched to fight future pandemics'; the membership of this public private partnership is a clear indication that this initiative is neither 'new' nor 'global'. The Partners listed include a select few northern governments, The Gates Foundation, and multinational pharmaceutical companies alongside some global public health agencies. There has been no inclusion of low- and middle-income country governments, in the creation of this Partnership nor in the decision making around its agenda. In other words, this Partnership excludes the very countries who are on the front line of the unequal distribution of Covid-19 health tools and whose voices need to be heard the loudest. There has also been no consultation of civil society organisations in setting the priorities for this entity, despite a request being made. This Partnership seems to be just another initiative to defend the pharmaceutical monopolies that have created artificial scarcity of vaccine doses and led to grotesque vaccine inequality in this pandemic. We cannot continue to allow corporate interests to dictate the priorities of pandemic responses under the guise of 'global collaboration'.

With low and middle-income country governments and civil society absent, it is unsurprising that the aim of this partnership is particularly narrow, prioritising meeting a headline grabbing target of reducing vaccine development time for new diseases from 300 to 100 days. While we agree that speeding-up new vaccine development is a laudable objective, if most of the world's population can't access them, then their public health value will be significantly limited. Without a concrete plan to maximise global manufacturing capacity by sharing technology and know-how and waiving IP rules relevant to the vaccines, the power to produce, allocate, and price will remain in the hands of multinational pharmaceutical companies. As stated above, this has led to artificial rationing of vaccine supplies and entirely inequitable vaccine coverage with a handful of high-income countries holding 81% of the world's vaccines supplies and low- and middle-income countries holding just 17%.

As global civil society actors who have been working for decades to overcome access barriers to health technologies, we implore the UK Government to learn from the mistakes that have been made in this pandemic. Having the same approach to vaccine development and manufacturing and decision making for future pandemics, will only lead to the same result - drastically unequal vaccine coverage, the continuing emergence of new variants and a growing death toll.

We urge the UK Government to instead use its G7 Presidency to instigate a sea-change in the Covid-19 response by following the USA and supporting the TRIPS Waiver proposal on Covid-19 health tools and set a precedent for future pandemics which places equity and a sustainable supply of pandemic tools at its centre. The world also needs the UK, and other G7 countries to put their political weight behind a call to industry to share their technologies openly and for governments to support pharmaceutical manufacturing hubs in low- and middle-income countries to increase the supply of pandemic health tools. Ultimately, we need real global cooperation, not another front for corporate interests to be put ahead of global public health needs.

Yours Sincerely,

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