

## Civil society remarks delivered at the September 10<sup>th</sup> 2020 ACT-A Facilitation Council Meeting

Dr Fifa Rahman – Board Member NGO's, Unitaid

As Members and Partners of the Facilitation Council of the 'Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator' (ACT-Accelerator), on the occasion of the Council's launch meeting;

We share the vision of the ACT-Accelerator as a unique international collaboration to fast-track the development and equitable deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics globally while strengthening related health systems;

We thank the World Health Organization and the European Commission for their leadership in co-convening this first meeting of the Facilitation Council at this crucial time, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on the health, societies and economies of all countries;

We welcome South Africa and Norway as the Council's co-chairs;

We recognize that the fastest and most effective solution to the COVID-19 crisis, and the full mitigation of its health, social and economic consequences, is through global multilateral collaboration and international solidarity that supports all countries and populations, including the world's poorest. We would like to highlight global solidarity within this effort, and the need to reduce the atavistic race for health tools (in particular vaccines) and growing gap between preferential access for HICs and left overs for everyone else. We remain concerned of ongoing vaccine, treatment, and diagnostics nationalism that is seeing health technologies being bought up and reserved by countries with high bargaining power. The ACT-Accelerator must challenge this current trend.

We fully align with the ACT Accelerator goal of rapidly reducing the risk of severe COVID 19 disease globally which will in turn bolster the capacity of health systems to safely and effectively manage COVID 19 and restore the global confidence needed to resume economic and societal activity.

We appreciate the leadership and work of the ACT Accelerator Pillar co-conveners and their partners for the substantial achievements to date, while recognizing the considerable challenges they face to realize the full potential of this unprecedented global collaboration. We believe that the success of this effort must occur in full transparency across the spectrum of activities and with the full engagement of Global South actors, including CSOs and communities living with COVID-19, as equal partners and not just as beneficiaries.

We consider the ACT Accelerator an integral part of the implementation of the World Health Assembly Resolution (WHA73.1) and that it responds fully to the G20 Leaders Commitment of 26 March 2020 as both highlighted the need for end to end solutions to accelerate the development and equitable universal deployment of life saving COVID 19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics; We acknowledge the urgency of catalysing a step-change in political support and financing for the ACT-Accelerator in order to enable it to deliver on its mission of accelerating the discovery and deployment of new COVID-19 tools to all people, everywhere;

## **Accordingly, we will**

- 1. Provide sustained political leadership to galvanize and harness broad international support for the ACT-Accelerator**, including in key upcoming fora such as the UN General Assembly, the G20 and G7 processes, the Paris Peace Forum and IMF/World Bank Group meetings and through our respective regional cooperation groups and national processes;
- 2. Advocate in support of the ACT-Accelerator Investment Case in order to secure as a matter of urgency the financial resources required to scale-up for impact** and change the course of the pandemic;
- 3. Honour and realize our shared commitment to leave no one behind in this crisis**, by working to ensure that all countries and populations have early and equitable access to the new vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics that the ACT-Accelerator is pursuing.

## **Dr Carolyn Gomes – Alternate Board Member, Developing Country NGO Delegation to the Global Fund Board**

Honourable Co-Chairs, Ministers, Colleagues on behalf of Civil Society I have the honour to make the following comments on the Investment case and the Action Plan:

The Facilitation Council must take a leadership role in driving the equitable access mandate across all pillars. Need to focus more on the equitable access and distribution issues for LMICs. The fact that up to 89% of the world's total vaccine doses for 2021 have been already claimed by HICs illustrates the importance of equity in the work of the ACT-A Accelerator. We commend the plan that recognises that results of the increasing bilateral deals must be aligned with the global allocation framework,

The focus on advance market commitments and capacity reservations is not enough to address the problems of insufficient manufacturing capacity and needlessly high prices. The issue of intellectual property, information, and data rights should be addressed by requiring open licensing and full technology transfer to significantly expedite and expand supplies.

ACT-A's partnership with the C-TAP could foster this needed ecosystem, helping to ensure faster and more equitable access to existing and new COVID-19 health products.

**Currently there is more support to the vaccine pillar compared to the other pillars - it will be important to implement mechanisms to ensure that the other pillars are not structurally under-funded**

**We suggest there should be increased focus on Diagnostics in LMICs is required and should not be limited solely to case detection at health centres. RDTs, including antigen tests are beginning to be widely deployed and have significant potential to contribute to the reopening of economies and trade to open schools, businesses, and travel.**

**Civil Society believes that the investment case should project a much more dynamic response to the pandemic, signalling the implication that additional, targeted and innovative investments may be needed.**

**We wish to highlight the importance of transparency and public accountability in the use of funds and the need for regular public reports.** Attention should be paid to strengthening mechanisms for timely reporting to all constituencies outwards to the world on progress to date and future plans. We also need to expand participation by all relevant stakeholders, including LMICs govts beyond Gavi board and civil society.