

# High level event on ending the COVID-19 pandemic through equitable access to vaccines, tests and treatments

*Side Event at the High-Level Week of 77<sup>th</sup> United Nations General Assembly*

23 September 2022, Conference Room 2, UNHQ

## Context

The COVID-19 pandemic is not over. The virus is continuing to inflict a significant loss of lives and livelihoods, hampering the global economic recovery. Almost 50% of all COVID-19 cases diagnosed since the start of the pandemic were detected in the first half of 2022, despite declining testing across the world. In the same period, nearly 1 million deaths have been recorded, which is also likely a significant undercount.

Global leaders now have the means and opportunity to end the pandemic in 2022. The availability of effective vaccines, user-friendly diagnostics and new lifesaving oral antiviral treatments provides a powerful combination of countermeasures for significantly reducing the damage of COVID-19. The Access to COVID-19 Tools – Accelerator (ACT-A) provides a platform to support equitable access to these products. And recent increases in vaccination coverage, particularly in challenging settings, has contributed crucial experience for countries in introducing effective test to treat strategies. However, important barriers still need to be resolved, especially to ensure the highest risk populations are vaccinated and that LMICs have access to new oral antivirals for outpatient treatment.

UNGA is a key opportunity for global leaders to (i) take stock of progress in rolling out COVID-19 countermeasures against targets of the WHO Vaccine Strategy<sup>1</sup>, ACT-Accelerator Strategic Plan<sup>2</sup>, and the COVID-19 Summit convened on the margins of 76<sup>th</sup> UNGA<sup>3</sup>, (ii) identify priorities for ensuring the vaccination of all high-risk populations and implementation of test to treat strategies everywhere. A highly vaccinated population diminishes the risk of transmission, lowers the risk of severe illness and hospitalization, and reduces the chances of new variants emerging. Countries have on average already vaccinated 75% of their health care workers (HCWs) and 76 % of their older populations, 60 countries have achieved >70% overall coverage, and only 10 countries, many of which face humanitarian emergencies, remain below 10%.

To date, ACT-Accelerators vaccine pillar COVAX provided 1.53 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to 146 countries. Despite having achieved an impressive delivery rate, more needs to be done. Booster coverage remains low everywhere, and in low-income countries only 35% and 31% of HCWs and older populations, respectively, are fully vaccinated. As concerning, COVID-19 testing rates have plummeted everywhere, leaving the world blind to the full evolution of the pandemic and emerging variants, and potentially compromising the rollout of the new lifesaving oral antivirals

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/global-covid-19-vaccination-strategy-in-a-changing-world--july-2022-update>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/act-accelerator-strategic-plan-budget-october-2021-to-september-2022>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/24/global-covid-19-summit-ending-the-pandemic-and-building-back-better/>

molnupiravir and nirmatrelvir/ritonavir. Achieving the full potential of these new medicines to save lives also continues to be hampered by a severely limited supply of these products for LMICs

## Objectives

The overarching objective of this event is to take stock of the global roll out of COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, identify priority areas to accelerate equitable access, and mobilize additional political support to effectively end the pandemic this year by accelerating vaccination rates and implementing test to treat strategies everywhere.

## Format

This will be a live-streamed on UN Web TV with the option of virtual and in person participation. Translation in all 6 UN official languages. The event will be open for all Member States and external partners. The event will last for 90-minutes and will have 3 segments:

1. High level opening segment – *30 min*
2. Two high level roundtables with 3 speakers each (e.g. 1 country speaker, 1 partner speaker from IOs and 1 CSO and/or industry speaker). There will be an opportunity for comments, prepared remarks and questions from the floor through a brief moderated discussion at the end of both panels – *50 min*
  - The first roundtable will share experiences and critical actions needed to vaccinate all at-risk populations and healthcare workers on the way to achieving the 70% coverage target.
  - The second roundtable will discuss the implementation of effective national test to treat strategies, including equitable access to new oral antiviral treatments for LMICs.
3. High level closing segment with a **call to action** to take forward the priority interventions identified for accelerating COVID-19 vaccination and test to treat strategies, while drawing lessons from the pandemic to implement WHO's '*10 Proposals to Build a Safer World Together*' – *10 min*

## Organizing partners

- This will be a UN led event, organized by UN Secretary General's Office, World Health Organization and UNICEF with the support of ACT-A partners.

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23 September 2022, 15.00-16.30 (EST)

### Timed Agenda

<b>High level opening segment</b>		
<b>Introductory remarks, introduced by MC</b>		
15:00-15:04	H.E António Guterres ( <i>live</i> )	Secretary General, the United Nations
15:05-15:09	H.E Cyril Ramaphosa (TBC)	President, South Africa ( <i>Co-Chair of the ACT-Accelerator</i> )
15:10-15:14	H.E Jonas Gahr Støre (TBC)	Prime Minister, Norway ( <i>Co-Chair of the ACT-Accelerator</i> )
15:15-15:19	Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus	WHO Director-General
15:20-15:24	Catherine Russell	UNICEF Executive Director
<b>High level roundtables</b>		
<b>Opening speaker, introduced by MC</b>		
15:26-15:30	H.E Antony J. Blinken (TBC)	Secretary of State, United States
<b>Roundtable on reaching the 100-100-70 vaccine target, moderated by IFRC President</b>		
15:31-15:35	H.E Umy Mwalimu (TBC)	Minister of Health, Tanzania
15:36-15:40	H.E José Manuel Barroso	Board Chair, Gavi
15:41-15:45	Pascal Soriot (TBC)	CEO, AstraZeneca
<i>15:45- 15:55: Q&amp;A/moderated discussion</i>		
<b>Roundtable on test to treat, moderated by Assistant Secretary for Global Affairs HHS, USA</b>		
15:55-15:59	H.E Mam Bunheng (TBC)	Minister of Health, Cambodia
16:00-16:04	Peter Sands	Executive Director, Global Fund
16:05-16:09	Dr Carolyn Gomes (TBC)	Executive Director of Caribbean Vulnerable Communities Coalition
<i>16:10-16:20 Q&amp;A/moderated discussion</i>		
<b>A call to action – closing segment</b>		
<i>Introduction by MC</i>		
16:20-15:24	H.E Joko Widodo (TBC)	President, Indonesia (G20 Presidency)
16:25-16:30	H.E Amina Mohammed	Deputy Secretary General, the United Nations