



Special press conference to mark the first anniversary of the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP)

Summary Report

Date and time: 28 May 2021 18:00 to 19:00 CET

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization

In his opening remarks, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros indicated that WHO was currently convening the World Health Assembly, the annual meeting of nations to discuss common health challenges and agree on a common way forward. He noted that the range of issues being discussed is immense: from diabetes to malaria, disabilities, oral health and much, much more, including COVID-19 as a focus of a lot of discussion. There had been broad consensus during the week that equitable access to vaccines is essential for ending the COVID-19 pandemic. With over 3.5 million recorded deaths from COVID-19, an estimated loss to the global economy of 22 trillion US dollars and new variants compounding explosive outbreaks, he explained that the pandemic is far from over. He recalled a previous speech in which he called on world leaders to support a massive push to vaccinate at least 10% of the population of every country by September, and 30% by the end of the year. He described the “sprint to September” goal to vaccinate at least 250 million more people in low- and middle-income countries, including all health workers and the most at-risk groups as the first priority. He further explicated that if countries immediately share doses with COVAX, and if manufacturers prioritize COVAX, the world can reach this target and save a lot of lives. Ultimately, he said, the fastest way to bring the pandemic to an end is to dramatically increase global manufacturing of vaccines, tests, treatments and other medical supplies, and ensure equitable access. He highlighted that one year ago, the President of Costa Rica, His Excellency Carlos Alvarado Quesada, and more than 40 Heads of State joined WHO to form C-TAP, the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool. C-TAP draws on the experience of the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP), and provides a single platform where innovators of COVID-19 health products can voluntarily share knowledge and technologies with quality-assured manufacturers. C-TAP is based on a proven method. Voluntary, non-exclusive licenses issued through the Medicines Patent Pool, have saved lives by scaling up manufacturing for treatments against HIV, TB and other diseases. He noted that WHO welcomes the interest expressed by several diagnostic manufacturers who are already in advanced discussions with C-TAP to share their technology. And also from research institutions who are willing to share their knowledge through C-TAP. He explained thought that C-TAP needs more developers to come forward and share life-saving tools in order to ramp up production and expand access. Originator companies that contribute their knowledge to C-TAP can quickly access the production capacity they need to manufacture enough for everyone, while collecting appropriate royalties. Contributions to C-TAP are voluntary, transparent and non-exclusive, allowing multiple qualified producers around the world to manufacture COVID-19 health products. Once agreements are signed, C-TAP will support companies in the management of signed agreements for effective implementation and provide technical assistance to countries when needed. Once fully functional, C-TAP assisting in the expansion of manufacturing could provide increased supply for countries and COVAX. He further explained that he and the President of Costa Rica issued an open letter the day before that called on all countries to support C-TA, noting that governments can play a lead role in creating incentives for industry to support the effort.

His Excellency Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica

His Excellency Carlos Alvarado Quesada thanked Dr Tedros for his leadership and his team's leadership and partnership, noting medical and moral leadership that is needed against COVID-19. He also thanked all the Ministers in national authorities that joined the event. He explained that Costa Rica is proud to celebrate the first

anniversary of the Solidarity call to Action and its platform, the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool, known as C-TAP. He highlighted the engagement and collaboration of 42 States that joined and supported C-TAP and welcomed Spain as the newest sponsor of the Call to Action. He explained that C-TAP was launched with the conviction of its potential to help the world to stop the pandemic, seeking for multilateral solutions to accelerate the development of the therapeutic tools needed to fight COVID-19 and to guarantee global access for diagnosis, therapeutics and prevention, including vaccines. All this by promoting innovation, removing barriers and facilitating open exchange of knowledge, intellectual property and data on a voluntary basis. He noted that making this knowledge available through non-exclusive licenses and in a transparent manner can help release bottlenecks and scale up production not only for vaccines but for medicines and treatments, allowing production in different parts of the world. He asserted that we have always known that only when everyone everywhere can have timely access to the health technologies for COVID-19 detection, prevention, treatment and response we will be able to fully recover from the pandemic and C-TAP can help us achieve that exactly. He pointed to the shocking inequalities in the access to vaccines that demand a change of practice, noting that it is not acceptable that more than 50% of the globally available vaccines were used in only five countries that account for 50% of global GDP. He explained that shamefully lower-income countries have received only 0.3 of the world doses. He noted that this week Costa Rica, together with leaders from the Latin American and Caribbean region, made an urgent call to those countries that have excess doses or that have already vaccinated their population at risk to share those surpluses immediately in an equitable way, but he described it as only one piece of the puzzle. He called for overcoming the challenges generated by bilateral negotiations and property rights. He invited all of those who have not yet joined the C-TAP to do so. He reaffirmed that Costa Rica will continue supporting a stronger architecture on epidemic preparedness and response, including a WHO treaty on the topic. He hoped that the principles of C-TAP will be a central part of a future action, noting that COVID-19 has imposed upon the world enormous challenges, not only social but economic. He recalled that the world has lost millions of lives, millions of jobs and opportunities and smiles. He explained that we have understood how vulnerable we are but the crisis has also given us a chance to make things differently and work together in ways we have never done before and hopefully we will be able to overcome it in solidarity, co-operation and strengthen the international pandemic and response framework.

The Honourable Arancha González Laya, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Spain

The Honourable Arancha González Laya explained that if we are to defeat COVID-19 we need to exponentially increase the production of vaccines and ensure much faster distribution to those in need around the world and that this is why an initiative called Vaccines For All was launched. He noted that we need to exploit fully all the flexibilities that exist within the rules of intellectual property worldwide and to increase exponentially the manufacturing by using unutilized capacity and transferring know-how and technology to produce. He explained that we need to also ensure faster distribution to all corners of the world and that we should be capitalizing COVAX and sharing vaccines, especially those that have availability today. He outlined these points as his vision for ensuring equitable access to vaccines and explained that today Spain decided to join C-TAP, an initiative that will ensure the transfer of knowledge, technology and know-how to speed up the production of vaccines. He highlighted that Spain is proud to join the family that Costa Rica and others started building last year. Non-exclusive, transparent licenses are vital to increased production and we do hope that by boosting C-TAP in the coming months and transferring know-how and knowledge, complemented by all the flexibilities that exist within the rules of intellectual property rights, we can enable production worldwide, especially in developing countries, where production capacity today is a possibility but not a reality. Spain has always favored measures to facilitate universal access to medicines and treatments and has done, for example, through their support to Unitaaid and also through their support to the Medicines Patent Pool which he said Spain is glad to see is working together as an implementing partner of C-TAP. He expressed that Spain is contributing substantively to C-TAP and announced that the Vice-President of the Spanish National Research Council, Jesús Marco, would explain the modalities for Spain's engagement in C-TAP. He concluded by saying that we must ensure greater synergies between C-TAP and ACT-A, the initiative of which Spain is also a founding member and an active contributor. If this happens, he said we will have all the ingredients to win the battle against COVID-19.

Professor Jesús Marco, Vice-president, Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)

Professor Jesús Marco explained that at CSIC, the Spanish National Research Council, they have worked since the beginning of the pandemic to ensure that all the COVID-19-related technologies being developed in their labs reach society as soon as possible. Their aim is for them to be manufactured in Spain but also in any other country that demands them and to this end they have approached licensees for the assignment of exploitation rights for these CSIC technologies on non-exclusive terms to avoid any situations in which demand cannot be met due to production limitations on the part of the licensee. In this regard and being aware of the C-TAP initiative, he noted that a few months ago they began talks with both the WHO and the MPP with the idea of launching transfer pricing

in which an open license would be granted for the commercialization of CSIC technologies. Specifically the first approach they have considered is based on the development of a serological test with 99% reliability, capable of identifying and quantifying three different types of antibodies, IgG, IgM and IgA, and also able to differentiate antibodies by vaccination from those produced by natural COVID-19 infection. In addition as part of their global vaccine trial, CSIC is also committed to promote the commercialization of some of their vaccine candidates, expanding the possibility of licensing them on a non-exclusive basis in order to meet society's demand and help on building capacities and transferring the technologies to low- and middle-income countries.

The Honourable Meryame Kitir, Minister of Development Cooperation, Belgium

The Honourable Meryame Kitir explained that in the past year we've faced many issues of conscience as human beings and office-holders have had to take up responsibility. Never have so many resources been mobilized in so little time and he expressed that our safety and freedom depends on our willingness and capacity to provide that same safety and freedom to everyone around the world, noting that no one is safe until everyone is safe. He explained that there is a reality we cannot deny. He urged us to not forget that we are in a pandemic for more than one year now and unprecedented crises require unprecedented responses beyond business as usual. He said that solutions exist but still are unused. A few countries have secured the majority of life-saving vaccines, much more than needed, and left billions of people behind while the pandemic is not over and health systems continue to collapse, while according to UNICEF only 43% of the world production capacity for approved vaccines is used. He mentioned that we succeeded in developing vaccines at an unusual speed but we failed to share life-saving COVID-19-related technology and knowledge and to speed up their production as soon as possible at an affordable price to be administered everywhere. He highlighted that one-year ago the Belgian Government signed the Solidarity Call to Action because Belgium was convinced that the only way forward was by joining forces, government, organizations and industry together, with a clear public health object in mind, by putting self-interest aside while facing a common enemy. He noted that today Belgium is still convinced, more than ever and he took a strong commitment to further promote C-TAP at national and international levels. He noted that if we want to boost production capacity, knowledge and data need to be shared. He also committed to continuing to urge pharmaceutical companies and other stakeholders to consider C-TAP and voluntary sharing of knowledge as an acceptable and viable solution. In Belgium they recently organized a round table with public, private and academic actors, bringing together expertise, know-how and technology. With Team Europe, Belgium is keen to support local manufacturing capacity of medical supplies and vaccines in Africa. He highlighted the first anniversary of C-TAP as a key moment, a key moment to develop a new business as usual, a key moment to show joint leadership, a key moment to prove once again that we're stronger together because the most effective vaccine in order to defeat this pandemic is not only what is in the syringe. He expressed that the most effective vaccine is called solidarity..

Honourable Budi Gunadi Sadikin, Minister of Health, Indonesia

Honourable Budi Gunadi Sadikin noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought us to one of the darkest times in recent history. Indonesia by today has 1.8 million confirmed cases and around 50,000 deaths. He expressed that while we have seen good news in some parts of the world in many countries rolling out successful vaccination programmes, diagnostics and therapeutics, some other countries are still lacking access to those tools. As one of the first countries to join C-TAP, he noted that Indonesia strongly supports the C-TAP initiative to ensure global access to vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutic technologies in our fight against COVID. Indonesia is ready to contribute. He explained that as the largest vaccine manufacturer in South-East Asia, Indonesia has the capacity to upscale their vaccine production to meet regional and global demand. Indonesia has a unique position also because they are one of the largest Muslim countries, where manufacturing vaccine with halal certificates sometimes can be very crucial in the implementation of a vaccine programme. Currently, Indonesia has six manufacturers with production capacity of 550 million doses per annum. Unfortunately, he explained that Indonesia can only produce vaccine with the technology platform of a virus or protein base. Indonesia does not have access to vaccine with factor base or nucleic acid base like messenger RNA but he explained that Indonesia is really looking to have access to those technologies and are ready to contribute. He reiterated Dr Tedros mantra that no-one is safe until everyone is safe and added that if a country wants to go fast they can go alone but if countries want to go far and long they have to go together.

Abdul Muktadir, Chairman and Managing Director, Incepta Pharmaceuticals

Abdul Muktadir praised C-TAP as a wonderful initiative and congratulated the President of Costa Rica and the Director-General of the WHO for the establishment of the platform. He said that many people have released very soothing and encouraging statements about C-TAP but that unfortunately some of them are misleading and empty, noting that one year has passed but the initiative is yet to bring any results. He highlighted summary statements that low- and middle-income countries do not have the ability to acquire the technology and deliver quality products

and wondered who made such a critical assessment and how people can make such statements. On trawling through such comments, 80 to 90% of the medicines by volume for the whole world including the developed countries are made by generics companies. He said that if some people are not willing to collaborate then it is their choice and the world leaders should try to find out the real reason and mitigate their concern. He explained that there is untapped, high-quality production capacities in countries like Bangladesh and these can be utilized to increase the supply of vaccine. He urged that we should try to find out ways to make C-TAP successful, to identify what technology is actually available. Inactivated vaccine appears to be providing good results and the technology is well-known. He outlined steps that WHO may take to make it available: 1) clearly document the technology and encourage sharing of clinical data from existing manufacturers; 2) if the existing producers are not willing to share data then WHO can define a clear regulatory pathway for fast generation of data through clinical studies with approved vaccines; 3) provide information on availability of equipment and other relevant information on supply chain. He posited that international collaboration is often hindered because of national regulatory operating of some countries with substantial vaccine capacities. He urged WHO leadership to urgently look into the situation and urged expedited manufacturing in vaccine-producing countries and low- and middle-income countries, noting that this step would certainly provide a major positive change in availability of vaccines. He said that a successful vaccine may be selected by WHO and a clear regulatory pathway may be defined. It can be manufactured fast in billions of doses and can be offered at a very, very low cost and Bangladesh can do it. He reiterated that no one is safe until everyone is safe but the world is not doing enough to keep everyone protected, especially in the low- and middle-income countries. He explained that there is no time to delay and that every single day matters. He said that C-TAP is a timely initiative that provides the platform for hope that should be made successful.

Alejandra Sanchez Cabezas, Director, Observatorio de Salud, Argentina

Alejandra Sanchez Cabezas, representing civil society organizations and the scientific world, expressed feeling honored to express concerns regarding the lack of access of citizens around the world to medical products, especially vaccines. Originating from Latin America, which she noted being the most inequitable region in the world, she explained that the pandemic has widened the gap of inequality. She noted a lack of vaccines which has forced governments to decree very strict lock-downs that have slowed down the economy and have worsened the situation. She said civil society organizations as well as the scientific organizations that she represents believe the following. 1) Member States in WHO have taken decades to recognize the importance of health as a human right and it is necessary to take action on the social determinants for health and work towards universal health coverage with models of solidarity that are based on primary healthcare. She said it has come the time to translate into action these tools, ensuring equitable and universal access to vaccines as well as to medical products that are necessary to deal with this pandemic. Universal health coverage means today universal access to vaccines. 2) unequal access to vaccines is not only an issue of patents and privileges. She said one can read the headlines to observe this unequal access to vaccines and medical products and that we see this in the news all the time and in the news we also see scenes of violence and wars and desperate waves of migrants and on these same news pages because of the pandemic we can see the threats of new governments looming as well as the weakening of democracies that seemed so securely established. 3) the American continent has an experience in the role of vaccines and the strengthening of peace and democracy. In fact, she said, the initiative Health as a Bridge for Peace that the regional office of WHO and PAHO launched in the 1980s and 90s has shown that we can convene civil society, the State and the markets that can provide conditions that improve the lives of their people. 4) civil society is a responsible stakeholder alongside states and multinational agencies and work on initiatives such as Set Up, ACT Accelerator and the COVAX facility. The most powerful in the world must understand that there's no future possible if only technological access and technological medical products are only in the hands of a few, that this needs to be a collective interest and must be shared amongst all. She expressed that we need to have urgent action to be able to reverse the trend that we see in Latin America and other countries. She explained that less-developed countries have to be able to deal with emergencies without depending on philanthropic organizations that provide funds that are insufficient but that provide them too late as well. She called on international organizations, governments and pharmaceutical companies to rise to this historic challenge, noting that civil society aspires to live in a world that is more equitable and more democratic and that civil society will support those that want to harness the real necessary power to mobilize inclusive and supportive activities. She said civil society is ready and it is now time for action.

See full press conference transcript [here](#). See WHO Director-General's opening remarks [here](#).