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Statement

IFPMA Director General Michael D. Boyd's Remarks at WHO-UN Meeting with Vaccine CEOs Geneva, 19 May 2009

Mr Secretary General, Madame Director General, Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today in the shadow of the pandemic influenza threat posed by the Novel A / H1N1 virus.

My name is Michael Boyd and I am Acting Director General of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations. I am speaking on behalf of the IFPMA Influenza Vaccine Supply international task force, which brings together sixteen of the leading research-based influenza vaccine manufacturers, from all five continents.

We applaud the WHO for its leadership in addressing the H1N1 outbreak and welcome its efforts to strengthen collaboration with industry and to address the issues which have yet to be resolved. Clearly, we should do what we can to mitigate this threat. Given its potential scale, this will require a well-coordinated effort between multilateral organizations, governments around the world, public-private partnerships and industry.

Our members are ready to produce an H1N1 pandemic vaccine when requested. They develop and produce most of the world's seasonal influenza vaccine. They have also invested more than 4 billion US dollars over the last few years, both in pandemic vaccine research - to maximize the number of doses that can be made using existing capacity - and in building additional influenza vaccine production capacity.

Developing a pandemic vaccine is a race against time. The WHO and the vaccine industry, in developed and developing countries alike, are working together closely to ensure rapid communication. The H1N1 outbreak shows that the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance Network works, making essential information and materials available to all manufacturers quickly and with a minimum of bureaucracy. Its rapid functioning is essential for a timely response to any pandemic threat and must not be compromised.

The research-based vaccine and pharmaceutical industry is very conscious that countries differ widely in their level of economic development. Our members have voluntarily put in place a range of measures to help developing countries to access antiviral medicines and vaccines, including substantial donations to WHO stockpiles, tiered pricing adjusted to countries' ability to pay and voluntary licensing agreements with suitable local producers in developing countries.

Some IFPMA member companies have also indicated to the WHO their readiness to reserve a portion of their vaccine manufacturing capacities for supply to developing countries.

As Director General Chan recently said, the world has never been better prepared to face a possible pandemic. In part, at least, this is due to the combined efforts of the WHO and the vaccine industry represented by the IFPMA. Again, our companies stand ready to produce pandemic vaccines when requested and we are conscious of the need to provide access to developing countries, and are willing to work with other partners to help facilitate this.

Geneva, 19 May 2009