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## **Introductory remarks by Thomas Cueni, at IFPMA media briefing on 13 April 2022**

Thank you again for joining us for this media briefing that will give you a snapshot of what biopharmaceutical companies continue to innovate and manufacture in response to the pandemic.

Already last year, we were telling policy makers that supplies of COVID-19 vaccines were fast out-stripping demand. We ended 2021 with over 11 billion vaccines being manufactured. That's from zero to 11 billion doses within a bit more than a year, which is a colossal scale up, involving hundreds of suppliers and partner manufacturers. Q1 2022 has seen 13.7 billion doses delivered and 11 billion doses administered. And now orders are slowing down. Countries as well as organizations such as Africa CDC are not only asking for orders to be delayed but are cancelling them.

I find it difficult to square this picture with that which I heard presented on the international stage in the past weeks: leading voices are still calling out vaccine scarcity. I do understand the concern. Vaccines are not reaching all those who need them. But the cause is no longer the lack of supplies. It's a scarcity of vaccination, not vaccines; which is due to a the lack of country readiness, absorption capacity, and the lack of resources needed to get vaccines into arms.

We, industry, predicted this trend. And we repeat our calls that you have heard us share since May last year, that urgent steps are needed to get the vaccines to those who need them.

No one is safe until every is safe; and this applies to this pandemic and for any discussion about being better prepared for future pandemics.

We have seen heroic work of healthcare workers. We have seen the hugely important work done by the world's healthcare regulators during the pandemic, which saved millions of lives. Regulatory flexibility and collaboration among the leading agencies proved invaluable in particular for vaccines, from fast-tracked approvals and e-signature authorizations to expedited scientific guidance and rolling review processes.

We have seen the strength of a robust innovation ecosystem expand partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and technology transfer in unprecedented ways. And we have seen the importance of partnerships: public-private as well as well as private-private throughout the fight against the pandemic.

But we have also seen vaccine nationalism: vaccine hoarding and export bans. And we saw a lack of initial funding for initiatives such as COVAX, needed to procure enough vaccines early to ensure equitable access.



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I understand the anger of many Africans who received the first vaccines in March 2021, but then cruelly saw the rest of the world jab their way through 2021, while they were left to wonder when the next vaccines would arrive. They did arrive, late in 2021, but the harm had been done. We do need to, and are starting to answer Africa's calls for more self-reliance.

Vaccine nationalism and its manifestation through export bans, some vaccine projects failing while others were successful, and late funding of COVAX, robbed us of the promise of vaccine equity. These were the causes of vaccine inequity last year. And not, as many would wish you to believe, something that can be solved with a waiver on intellectual property on COVID-19 products.

Let me be as outspoken as I have always been on this point: equity needs to be our collective focus today and for future pandemics, but I am stunned that the proposed IP waiver is still debated while supplies are far outstripping demand and some factories have been put to a halt because of missing orders. Actually, IP has never been a hindrance to scaling up vaccine manufacturing but has been an enabler of hundreds of technology transfers and other forms of voluntary licensing.

Omicron and other variants are a reminder of the importance of continued vaccination, but also of COVID-19 treatments and testing. They underscore painfully the importance of full course immunization for the elderly, those with chronic diseases and immunocompromised wherever they live. Global targets are meaningless in this context. To meet meaningful targets and use the stocks available – we need to tackle TOGETHER distribution, absorption capacity and vaccine hesitancy.

*These remarks have been checked against delivery. The recording of the media briefing is available [here](#).*