

The global response: Working together to help the world get better

“Chance favours the prepared mind”. This was the mantra of Louis Pasteur, one of the world’s greatest scientists and a mastermind behind vaccines and breakthroughs which have saved millions of lives spanning three centuries.

Just as it was back then, the world is today confronted with a virus that sweeps across countries and continents, breaking into our homes and our hearts. This virus has caused devastation and pain in all corners of the world, locking us away from the touch of the people we love, the joy of the things we usually do and the sights of the places we want to be.

This sacrifice, and the heroic efforts of medical and care staff around the world, have helped us bend the trend in many parts of the world. While some are cautiously emerging from lockdown, others are still in isolation and see their daily social and economic lives severely restricted. Consequences could be particularly dramatic in Africa and the Global South as a whole.

But what we all have in common is that none of us can really think or plan ahead with any great certainty about what the future of the pandemic really holds.

This means that we all have a stake in this. None of us is immune to the pandemic and none of us can beat the virus alone. In fact, we will not truly be safe until all of us are safe – across every village, city, region and country in the world. In our interconnected world, the global health system is as strong as its weakest part. We will need to protect each other to protect ourselves.

This poses a unique and truly global challenge. And it makes it imperative that we give ourselves the best chance to defeat it. This means bringing together the world’s best - and most prepared - minds to find the vaccines, treatments and therapies we need to make our world healthy again, while strengthening the health systems that will make them available for all, with a particular attention to Africa.

We are building on the commitment by G20 leaders to develop a massive and co-ordinated response to the virus. We are supporting the call to action that the World Health Organization and other global health actors have made together. For this reason, we have recently launched the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a global cooperation platform to accelerate and scale-up research, development, access and equitable distribution of the vaccine and other life-saving therapeutics and diagnostics treatments. This laid the foundation for a real international alliance to fight COVID-19.

We are determined to work together, with all those who share our commitment to international co-operation. We are ready to lead and support the global response.

Our aim is simple: on the 4th of May we want to raise, in an online pledging conference, an initial 7.5 billion euros (8 billion dollars) to make up the global funding shortfall estimated by the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) and others.

We will all put our own pledges on the table and we are glad to be joined by partners from the world over. The funds that we raise will kick-start an unprecedented global cooperation between scientists and regulators, industry and governments, international organisations, foundations and health care professionals. We support the World Health Organisation and we are delighted to join forces with experienced organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust

Every single euro or dollar that we raise together will be channelled primarily through recognised global health organisations such as CEPI, Gavi, the Vaccines Alliance, as well as the Global Fund and Unitaid into developing and deploying as quickly as possible, for as many as possible, the diagnostics, treatments and vaccines that will help the world overcome the pandemic. If we can develop a vaccine that is produced by the world, for the whole world, this will be an unique global public good of the 21st century. Together with our partners, we commit to making it available, accessible and affordable to all.

This is our generation’s duty and we know we can make this happen. High quality and low-cost health technologies are not a daydream. And we have seen how public-private partnerships have managed to make many life-saving vaccines available to the poorest people on earth over the last two decades.

We know this race will be long. As from today, we will sprint towards our first goal but we will be ready for a marathon. The current target will only cover the initial needs: manufacturing and delivering medicines on a global scale will require resources well above the target.

Together, we have to ensure that resources will continue being mobilised and that progress will be made to achieve universal access to vaccination, treatment and testing.

This is a defining moment for the global community. By rallying around science and solidarity today we will sow the seeds for greater unity tomorrow. Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, we can redesign the power of community, society and global collaboration, to make sure that nobody is left behind.

This is the World against Covid-19. And together we will win.

Signatories: Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission; Charles Michel, President of the European Council; Giuseppe Conte, Prime Minister of Italy; Emmanuel Macron, President of France; Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany; Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway.

Press office - General Secretariat of the Council

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

press@consilium.europa.eu - www.consilium.europa.eu/press