

Chair's Statement, COVID-19 Global Action Plan Ministerial

One year ago, a diverse group of governments and organizations gathered to launch the COVID-19 Pandemic Prioritized Global Action Plan for Enhanced Engagement (“GAP”) with the objective of focusing political will and enhancing coordination to end the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen readiness for future pandemic threats. The GAP built on global COVID-19 response activities and commitments with a focus on six immediate Lines of Effort (LOEs): (1) Turning Vaccines into Vaccinations; (2) Bolstering Supply Chain Resilience; (3) Addressing Information Gaps; (4) Supporting Health Care Workers; (5) Promoting Acute Non-Vaccine Interventions; and (6) Strengthening the Global Health Security Architecture by advancing immediate and long-term reforms and governance that will impact both pandemic response today and future global health security.

Today, the GAP partners re-convened to assess the work of the GAP, identify remaining barriers to managing COVID-19, and reflect upon lessons learned to promote future collaboration to address global health security threats. GAP Ministers and partners hailed the complementary domestic, bilateral, and multilateral efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and welcomed in particular the actions that have accelerated medical countermeasure access and distribution through increased response coordination across GAP countries. They also acknowledged the challenges that remain and reaffirmed their shared enduring commitment to working together to address these challenges.

U.S. Secretary of State Blinken noted that by enhancing coordination among partners – and elevating the level of political commitment and strategic communication – the GAP provided a forum to advance global health security efforts, to help save lives and livelihoods, and to operationalize the axiom that “health security is national security.”

Enhanced Engagement in Combatting COVID-19

GAP partners affirmed the importance of collective, coordinated political action in addressing the pandemic. COVID-19 highlighted that diseases pose a direct threat to core elements of foreign policy, including economic growth and development; peace and security; and equity and human dignity,

renewing awareness of the need to view global health from a broad perspective. It also demonstrated that no one country acting alone can stop a pandemic; the greatest successes in combatting COVID-19 have occurred when countries, regions, and global and multilateral institutions have acted together. Building on the two leader-level COVID-19 Summits hosted by the White House, the GAP established a political mechanism for pandemic crisis management to exchange information and coordinate responses.

Reflection on the Global Action Plan

Participants took the opportunity to review the accomplishments of the GAP. They asserted that the GAP played a significant role, together with other multilateral and bilateral efforts, in generating political will and attention to drive new and existing efforts to advance common priorities and coordinated efforts to end the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, GAP partners have coordinated resources and capacities, and driven toward global COVID-19 vaccination targets.

Cooperating with initiatives like the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) including COVAX, Global VAX, and the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership (CoVDP), the average vaccination rate in GAP-targeted lower-income countries increased to over 50 percent, and in many of the targeted countries reached nearly full coverage for all at-risk health workers and older people. Partners noted that around 13 billion vaccine doses have been delivered globally. GAP members helped facilitate last-mile support for almost 80 countries; large-scale assistance to vaccinate, test, and treat; new policies to help achieve vaccine targets for high-risk populations including the elderly and health workers; supported youth vaccination and booster campaigns; and worked toward integrating COVID-19 services into routine health systems. Country partners also worked to create cold storage solutions appropriate for challenging environments, and to expand access to non-vaccine interventions, including testing, oral antivirals, and medical oxygen. GAP partners supported regional diversification of manufacturing and regional hubs for mRNA vaccine development and agreed to establish an implementation group to improve global access to medical supplies and services through a global clearinghouse mechanism for COVID-19 related products. They shared information on harmful mis- and disinformation, condemned active disinformation campaigns, and supported community-level interventions to combat information gaps.

Further Work on the COVID-19 Response

At the Ministerial today, participants identified areas needing further work, noting that global suffering caused by COVID-19 has not ended despite heroic efforts by our healthcare workers, private citizens, institutions, and organizations.

Even with the current wide availability of vaccines, there is a persistent need to focus efforts on protecting the world's most vulnerable from COVID-19, including through flexible and targeted strategies to address barriers to vaccinating the most vulnerable and at-risk populations, especially in disaster and conflict zones. Partners called for continued work to integrate COVID-19 vaccines, including boosters, into each country's national vaccine strategy, while minimizing future disruptions to routine immunizations and health services.

They acknowledged the great strides made in testing and treatment, but also noted that more needs to be done to address equitable access, including to diagnostic testing, oral antivirals, and medical oxygen. Partners noted the importance of identifying appropriate opportunities for coordination and investment by the global community for improved access and demand in low- and low-middle income countries for safe, effective, and affordable medical countermeasures, including therapeutics. GAP partners affirmed the need for genetic sequencing and rapid reporting for the timely detection of emerging variants of concern.

Need for Future Cooperation

Participants welcomed the heightened interest in health security as a foreign policy concern. They affirmed their commitment to promote international cooperation and coordination through political dialogue, exchange of experiences, and strategic discussions – including building genuine partnerships with a wide range of relevant stakeholders. They vowed to fight any attempt to weaponize health issues through information manipulation and interference, including disinformation.

Ministers stated that lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic must be used to inform the future response to be better prepared when new infectious disease threats emerge. They called for

strengthening the global health architecture and national, regional, and global capacities related to biosurveillance, epidemiological intelligence, labs, genomic sequencing, and primary care systems. Participants noted the need for pandemic surge capacities and platforms to promote more rapid and equitable responses and access to affordable medical countermeasures, and discussed the desire for rapid, consistent, and transparent outbreak-related information, data, and sample sharing. GAP participants noted the need for strong, resilient health care systems with effective infection prevention and control measures, including pursuing universal health coverage. They also called for ensuring timely access to critical medical countermeasures, including in humanitarian settings during future health crises. In order to sustain evolving demand for production of vaccines, tests, and treatments for COVID-19 and future threats, GAP partners recognized the need to stay focused on diversifying production and supporting new producers and platforms including through consideration of competitive pricing, demand generation schemes, voluntary transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, capacity-building, and skills and regulatory strengthening.

GAP partners affirmed the principle that no one is truly safe until everyone is safe, and the global community remains at risk so long as COVID-19 continues to spread and evolve. Participants hailed the importance of the GAP as a model for resolving gaps in future pandemic response. They committed to remain engaged on the critical and timely work ahead and reconvene as needed to enhance action and coordination needed to better prepare for future health security threats, in a rapid, transparent, safe, secure, accountable, and equitable manner. GAP partners welcomed international initiatives for better legal, financial, and coordination frameworks for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, and confirmed their commitment to building global consensus toward a safer world.

The United States, as Chair of the meeting, offered its appreciation to those countries and partners who participated in the COVID-19 Global Action Plan throughout the past year, including Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Maldives, Morocco, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, the African Union (Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the European Union, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the World Health Organization.