

Your Excellency, Dear Permanent Representative to the UN Organizations in Geneva, and delegate to the 72nd World Health Assembly,

We are writing to you to share our perspectives on key recommendations from the UN Interagency Coordination Group (IACG) on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), which recently concluded its work. As former members of the IACG, we stand firmly behind the concrete recommendations from the group, which, if implemented, can continue to galvanize governments, international agencies, donors, business, civil society and professionals to take urgent steps to secure global sustainable access to antimicrobials. We specifically wish to highlight measures for which we urge governments to agree immediately on ways to implement, including at discussions convened at the 72nd World Health Assembly.

Both of us, in particular through our roles with ReAct, an international, independent network dedicated to prevent and address antibiotic resistance, have advocated for immediate actions to address multiple system failures that are exacerbating AMR, including a lack of a sustainable pipeline of new antibiotics and the overuse of existing antibiotics in health care and food production. Antibiotics remain a cornerstone for basic and highly specialized medicine. The effectiveness of these drugs is key to ensuring effective cancer chemotherapy, surgery, organ transplants, and the survival of new-born babies with neonatal sepsis. If we do not take urgent steps, the consequences will be far-reaching. Drug-resistant infections claim an estimated 700,000 lives a year, but more than 5 million people die from treatable infections each year, most in low- and middle-income countries, many because they lack access to antimicrobials. By 2030, the World Bank estimates that up to 24 million people could be forced into extreme poverty, and the economic damage each year as a result of AMR could be comparable to the shocks experienced during the 2008 financial crisis but with no end in sight.

The IACG recommendations lay out tangible directions for tackling AMR that complement and build upon commitments already made in the WHO Global Action Plan and the UN Political Declaration on AMR. Some of the measures which we consider particularly important for governments to prioritize to address health system failures include:

- Equitable and affordable access to effective antimicrobials – and importantly also to vaccines and diagnostics – should be part of the essential package of Universal Health Coverage. To prevent shortages and market failures, governments may need to support alternative pathways to bring novel and to keep existing antibiotics on the market as well as pooled procurement of such health technologies.
- The continued effectiveness of these medicines will require investing in both the innovation of new health technologies and better stewardship practices, across both healthcare delivery and food systems.
- Enlisting civil society and professional groups in the front-line efforts to tackle AMR is key, and this too will require political, technical and financial support. Holding the private sector accountable will require transparency, monitoring, and realigning economic incentives.
- All this will require more strategic use of the considerable funding already paying for drug-resistant infections, deploying interventions like vaccinations and WASH efforts to reduce antibiotic use, and mobilizing new financing to avert the trillions in projected economic losses if AMR is not abated.

Justification for the need of new governance structures for AMR

Many of the changes needed to manage AMR will be the responsibility of national governments. However, there are certain dimensions of the AMR response that require new structures to be put in place to achieve global collective action. The IACG recommendations outline three such structures: A Global Leadership Group; a multi-stakeholder partnership platform, and an Independent Panel on Evidence.

Such new structures can provide leadership, promote new and urgently needed global collaboration, monitor progress, provide robust and authoritative assessments of the science across all sectors and mobilize technical, human and financial resources. The World Bank estimates that spending to address AMR in low- and middle-income countries requires 9 billion US dollars annually. It describes that “*action on AMR constitutes one of the highest-yield development investments available to countries today,*” with both “*substantial economic payoffs*” for low-income countries and “*the largest absolute and per capita gains*” flowing to high-income and upper-middle-income countries. Yet if governments fail to act now, the world will pay far more in the future to cope with the escalating impact of unchecked AMR. We believe that to secure such financial commitments requires unprecedented leadership.

There will be a need for coordination and monitoring of progress, particularly as governments implement National Action Plans. International efforts to address AMR must be properly aligned with other major international policy frameworks that are separate but clearly related, including the Sustainable Development Goals and a future UN political declaration on Universal Health Coverage. Finally, governments require an unbiased compass that can direct policy makers to address the challenge of AMR through a One Health Lens, unifying the insights across the evidence-based guidelines of the WHO, FAO and OIE.

We strongly support strengthening the Tripartite and UN Environment as it continues to set and improve upon norms and standards, build capacity and efforts to support communications for behavior change, provide technical support and synthesize evidence. Introducing additional governance structures would strengthen the Tripartite by allowing it to deliver on its core mandate while relying on new governance structures to secure political consensus among governments and across sectors. Of course, this will also require that the Tripartite and UN Environment, as well as these new governance structures, have sufficient resources. Enlisting the commitment of other intergovernmental agencies, from UNICEF and UNDP to the World Bank, is also critical.

Thus, we urge governments to demonstrate leadership and launch the Global Leadership Group, a multi-stakeholder partnership platform, and an Independent Panel on Evidence. We also note the importance of *how* such governance structures are implemented, including the composition of such new entities.

1. Create a One Health Global Leadership Group on Antimicrobial Resistance and multi-stakeholder partnership platform.

Resting on the shoulders of the Global Leadership Group and the multi-stakeholder partnership platform would be the responsibility for ensuring that milestones for addressing AMR are met, sustainable global financing for these efforts are ensured, and AMR is linked to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. For the Global Leadership Group to be credible and effective, we expect that the process to establish the GLG to be led by UN Member States and to be transparent, and that the composition of the GLG avoids financial conflicts of interest. We recognize the importance of capturing the perspectives and contributions of all stakeholders, including business and civil society, and as such, would expect that a GLG would also develop and facilitate a multi-stakeholder partnership platform for advising on global coordination and action, which is also recommended by the IACG. Such a platform should ensure LMIC representation, operate transparently, require participating stakeholders to report and avoid financial conflicts of interest in its deliberations. The Committee on World Food Security could provide a model for establishing such a multi-stakeholder partnership platform.

2. Establish an Independent Panel on Evidence for Action Against Antimicrobial Resistance.

An Independent Panel for Evidence would work with the inputs of technical experts and other relevant specialists (such as social scientists, ethicists and economists) globally and at the WHO, FAO and OIE to conduct regular scientific assessments, explain the implications of such assessments, highlight the most pressing risks and recommend options for action. There is an acute need for an Independent Panel in part because of the widening gap between science and policy and the need for cross-sectoral perspectives. Furthermore, without an Independent Panel, much of the growing base of evidence now generated by the scientific community is not effectively translated. For the work of the Independent Panel on Evidence to be effective and not duplicate the functions of other agencies and entities, it should build upon technical expertise, including from the Tripartite, UN Environment and the other UN agencies and international organizations.

We are proud to have worked with a diverse group of colleagues to formulate the findings and recommendations of the IACG, and sincerely hope that the report's recommendations are a call to action and a roadmap for the work ahead.



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