Statement on Agenda Item 11.7—Access to Medicines and Vaccines
Delivered at the 72nd World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland

Access is a complex issue, and in PATH's experience working to accelerate the development, introduction, and delivery of health products, we have observed that failures of access in low-resource settings are rarely due to a single cause. Barriers must be addressed holistically with a long-term approach addressing issues of quality, affordability, availability, acceptability, and sustainability.

The focus on stronger regulatory systems and harmonized processes is critical to facilitating access. Support from member states is necessary to build on existing initiatives, such as AVAREF and the African Medicines Registration Harmonisation Initiative, to strengthen capacity and streamline regulatory reviews.

WHO's role in helping coordinate needs-based research and development, through initiatives such as the R&D blueprint and the Global Observatory, is also vital. Unfortunately, these initiatives—and indeed global health R&D overall—are woefully underfunded.

In charting a way forward, we urge that WHO only seek to engage where it is uniquely positioned to do so. We further note with concern the proposed expansion of activities in the areas of intellectual property management and pricing. As a non-profit product developer with 40 years of experience, we have seen that there is no single "correct" approach. Each technology requires a tailored approach to ensuring equitable access; leveraging multisectoral partnerships brings the unique expertise and resources of governments, non-profits, and industry to the table. We urge WHO to be extremely cautious and to ensure that any of these new activities do not negatively impact existing research and development initiatives or partnerships.