

## **Statement on agenda item 12.1—Research and development for potentially epidemic diseases**

*Delivered at the 70<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly*

Global Health Council members, PATH, and members of the Global Health Technologies Coalition have decades of experience developing health technologies to detect, treat and prevent disease and are fully supportive of the goals of the R&D blueprint.

We would like to highlight the critical role that new tools will play in epidemic preparedness as well as endemic disease control and elimination; without new tools we will not be able to keep the next outbreak from growing into an epidemic or even pandemic.

We are pleased to see the report's focus on the need to strengthen regulatory capacity in order to support enabling environments for health R&D. We urge the WHO to highlight the success of efforts to harmonize regulatory systems across regional economic communities in Africa and call on WHO, in coordination with all member states and relevant stakeholders, to further support these efforts as an effective way to build global regulatory capacity.

While not a focus of the report, we want to highlight the importance of developing new tools that will be accessible to end users. Products should be affordable, available, and appropriate for use in low-resource settings where outbreaks often occur. Strengthening health systems, which includes the development of a strong digital health infrastructure, will support the timely and targeted deployment and uptake of new tools. Planning for access must begin at the start of the product development process to ensure timely deployment of new and improved products to prevent, detect and treat potentially epidemic diseases.

We welcome efforts to strengthen global coordination for the development of new tools, including with the establishment of CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness, and call on WHO as well as member states to fully support these efforts.