

WINNIE BYANYIMA

UNAIDS | 2020

UNAIDS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REMARKS

High-level virtual event

Tackling COVID-19 together through the ACT-Accelerator

30 September 2020

Your Excellencies,

Secretary-General and co-hosts, thank you for this meeting and for calling for global solidarity in the fight against COVID-19.

Access to COVID-19 tests, treatment and any future vaccine is the human right of each and every one of us. No matter the colour of our skin, the money in our pocket, or the country we live in.

We must back the multilateral solutions we have on the table to unlock supply for all COVID19 related technologies– the WHO ACT Accelerator, including its vaccine facility, COVAX, and the COVID Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).

We cannot keep knowledge and technology under wraps. Doing so puts artificial limits on production.

When the American virologist Jonas Salk was asked who owned the patent to the polio vaccine he invented, he replied: “There is no patent. Could one patent the sun?”

I am proud to be part of the People’s Vaccine alliance, calling for a vaccine to be fairly and speedily distributed across the world – free of charge – according to need.

This is what survivors of COVID-19 are calling for, who have signed an open letter to pharmaceutical industry leaders: a ‘people’s vaccine’ and treatments that are available to all.

We cannot repeat the painful lessons from the early years of the AIDS response, when people in wealthier countries got back to health, while millions of people in developing countries were left to die.

The measure of our success can’t be only about controlling the covid pandemic. It must also be about how we finish the battles on HIV, TB and malaria and how we strengthen preparedness against future pathogens.

Let us heed the lessons from the fight against HIV and have communities and people affected by the virus in the lead.

Our recovery, getting back on track for the Sustainable Development Goals needs a people’s vaccine, not a profit vaccine.

Thank you.

