

7. Expanding access to effective treatments for cancer and rare and orphan diseases, including medicines, vaccines, medical devices, etc...

Statement:

This report covers issues which need further and more detailed discussion. The global inequality witnessed in access to quality cancer treatments is unjust and unacceptable. When treatments for rare and orphan diseases do exist, they are limited to high income countries because of their price and TRIPS restrictions.

Member States must tackle monopolies on biological therapeutics in order to increase access to treatments for cancer and rare diseases, including gene-based therapies. Regulatory approval for generic biologics must be streamlined to avoid generic manufacturers having to run their own clinical trials, and data exclusivity for regulatory information must be eliminated. An accelerated approval programme for generic manufacturers of vaccines, is particularly needed. Technology transfer of biologics must be accelerated and IP barriers removed, utilising TRIPS flexibilities where necessary.

We share South Africa's concerns with regard to public and charitable funding of research into cancer, rare diseases and many other health technologies. The lack of transparency around the costs of R&D and the public financing of research prevents fair pricing of these medicines. Transparency of pricing, currently prevented by commercial and competition laws in many Member States, is essential, but transparency of R&D costs must come with it.

COVID-19 has shown us just how much public money is invested in research, and how many people, from the United Kingdom to Brazil to South Africa, volunteer in clinical trials. This public contribution must be reflected in the accessibility and affordability of the final health technologies.

We urge Member States and research institutions to put public interest conditions such as open access data, equitable pricing conditions and obligations to sub-license - on research into cancer and orphan and rare diseases. The best treatments for some of the world's worst diseases cannot depend on the solidarity of the poor, while accessible only to the rich.