

**Joint Town Hall Meeting of the Executive Boards of
UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP
Virtual meeting, Geneva HQ
21 April 2020**

Your Excellency Jukka Salovaara,

Your Excellency Walton Webson,

Your Excellency Amina Mohamed,

Excellencies, dear colleagues, and friends,

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to you today.

We are facing the defining health crisis of our time.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a test of our global solidarity, but it's also a test of our ability to come together to serve the people of the world as One UN.

Under the leadership of the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, WHO is committed to continuing to work with the UN family to fight the pandemic.

At WHO's request, the Secretary-General activated the United Nations Crisis Management Team in early February, led by Dr Mike Ryan, to coordinate the entire machinery of the UN to support countries as effectively as possible.

While WHO takes the lead on public health, other parts of the system lead in their areas of expertise.

WHO has now published its strategy update, to provide guidance for countries at each stage of the response, and to set priorities for the international community.

It is built on five strategic objectives:

To mobilize all sectors and communities in the response;

To control sporadic cases and clusters and prevent community transmission;

To suppress community transmission where it is occurring;

To reduce mortality through appropriate care;

And to develop safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics.

These strategic objectives must be supported by tailored national strategies to find, test, isolate and care for every case, and trace every contact.

In turn, national strategies must be supported at the international level in five key areas. These are the five areas WHO is focused on:

First, to support countries to build their capacities to prepare and respond.

This is the daily work of the organization at all three levels, and especially through our 150 country offices, who are working hand-in-hand with the UN Resident Coordinators to support the country response.

In addition to responding to COVID-19, we're also working to support countries in continuing essential health services.

For example, the disruptions from the pandemic have already led to postponements of vaccination campaigns against polio, measles, cholera, yellow fever and meningitis.

Our second priority is to provide epidemiological analysis and risk communication.

We do this through our daily situation reports, and through multiple risk communication products we have developed for various communities.

The third priority is to coordinate the global supply chain;

Last week we launched the United Nations Supply Chain Task Force, with the World Food Programme - thank you to my brother David Beasley - and other partners inside and outside the UN to deliver diagnostics, personal protective equipment and other medical supplies to the countries that need it most.

Through the end of May we intend to ship almost 180 million surgical masks, 54 million N95 masks and more than 3 million protective goggles.

With the Global Fund, UNICEF and Unitaid, we have also placed orders for 30 million tests over the next four months, which will be distributed through the UN Supply Chain System.

Fourth, we're providing technical expertise and mobilizing the health workforce.

We've provided training for more than 1.5 million health workers through our OpenWHO.org online training platform.

And we've engaged thousands of scientists and experts all over the world to develop detailed technical guidance for individuals, health providers and countries.

And fifth, we're working to accelerate research, innovation and knowledge sharing.

We've launched the Solidarity Trial, to evaluate the safety and efficacy of four therapeutics against COVID-19. So far, 100 countries have joined the trial, and this week, we expect that more than 600 hospitals will be ready to start enrolling patients.

Last week I spoke to President Macron, Bill Gates and several other partners about how we can work together to accelerate the development, production and equitable distribution of vaccines.

===

Thank you all for your collaboration and support so far. We still have a long way to go.

Our message to the world is that solidarity is the only way to defeat this pandemic.

The UN is leading by example, and must continue to do so. We are greater than the sum of our parts. Our collective strength is a great asset that, if used properly, can save many lives.

We're all in this together. And we will succeed together.

I thank you.

[718 words]