

AGENDA ITEM 7: UNIDO'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, TO BE
DELIVERED BY H.E
H.E. Mr. Zenebe Kebede KORCHO , PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ETHIOPIA, ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

Madam President,

The Africa Group thanks the Director General for his Report on this agenda item and commends him for his leadership and commitment to ensuring the Organisation continues to effectively deliver on its operational priorities in response to the Covid-19 pandemic as outlined in its framework document.

Madam President,

The Covid-19 pandemic has been one of the deadliest pandemics of our time. The pandemic has also caused industrial shutdowns, disrupted global trade, and in some cases has prompted restrictions on exports of essential commodities including medicines necessary to fight the crisis. These shocks to the health and socio-economic order are particularly more pronounced in developing and least developed countries with weak or non-existent manufacturing bases. In the case of Africa where no manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines occurs, the disease is causing untold suffering. The true extent of the health and economic burden of the disease is only likely to be determined many years from now.

Madam President,

The future progression of the pandemic remains uncertain as we continue to witness more infectious variants emerging in many countries as large parts of the world remain unvaccinated. As such, no country or region can truly count itself safe as long as the disproportionate roll-out of the vaccines continues. The Africa Group is therefore of the firm belief that one way of addressing this is by enhancing global solidarity in scaling up production and supply of vaccines, medicines and other health products through technology transfer and removal of IP restrictions on their manufacture. Global cooperation is critical to ensure that the necessary treatment is readily available to all, at affordable prices regardless of geographical location.

Madam President,

In the case of Africa, during the African Union Summit in Accra in 2007, African leaders already identified the strategic imperative of developing the pharmaceutical sector and therefore endorsed the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa. The aim of this Plan is to increase the supply of essential medicines and vaccines in Africa through the strengthening of the pharmaceutical industries on the continent. UNIDO, given its strategic mandate of promoting ISID, is a key partner for Africa and has an important role to play in not only supporting the successful implementation of this Plan to ensure immediate access to vaccines, but also to help spearhead post-pandemic economic recovery and build long-term resilience of economies to future pandemics.

Madam President,

Allow me to conclude by assuring the Director General of the Africa Group's full support and cooperation in ensuring that UNIDO delivers on its comprehensive socio-economic recovery support to all Member States as outlined in its framework document.

I thank you Madam President.
