Medicus Mundi International

Meeting: Executive Board 142

Agenda Item: 3.6 Addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines

Statement: Thank you Chairperson. MMI appreciates this opportunity to speak on this item. This statement is supported by PHM.

We welcome reference by the secretariat to the UNHLP's recommendations and the initiative to map WHO's activities in relation to some of these recommendations in the Annex to the report. However the issue of delinking the cost of Research and Development (R&D) from the end prices of health technologies has not been adequately addressed, and there is a mere mention of "a code of principles" being under consideration.

The report also includes key considerations prioritized in terms of impact, complexity and cost. However, we believe a clear vision on access to medicines and vaccines should not just discuss and harvest potentially low hanging fruits, but boldly implement strategies and approaches with the highest impact - and harness needed resources as a second step.

The recommendations by the UNHLP constitute a holistic approach and correctly identify the problem of access to medicines as a problem of both HICs and LMICs.

Further paragraph 8 mentions the issue of transparency in the R&D process. This item, it is argued, involves "greater complexity" and "additional resources". Rather, increased transparency in areas, like clinical trials, requires political will and WHO's norm-setting capabilities, and should therefore be addressed as soon as possible.

We urge WHO to align its activities with the recommendations of the UNHLP and formalise implementation of its recommendations by setting up a strategy and action plan. We urge WHO to take bold and visionary steps to delink the cost of Research and Development from the end prices of health technologies. We further urge WHO to consider a global convention on R&D, as suggested by the UNHLP. We cannot afford to delay action on this agenda any further -- millions of lives are at stake.