

**Statement to the 67th World Health Assembly
on agenda item 15.4 Access to Essential Medicines
delivered by Susana Barria**

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity of addressing the distinguished Members of the World Health Assembly on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

Millions of people die every year because medical products, even when available, do not reach those who need them the most.

We welcome renewed attention on Medicines' Access especially given the earlier poor record of adequately resourcing the WHO's Rational Use of Medicines program. Pledged resources for programs on medicines' access are trivial compared with the Pharmaceutical Industry's expenditure on marketing.

Resolution EB134.R16 would be a step forward in facilitating access to medicines. However, the resolution stops short of comprehensively addressing the range of barriers to equitable access. We urge member states to address collectively, and at the national level, the following:

The criterion of 'comparative cost-effectiveness' is applied while setting national priorities on essential medicines, including in the development and updating of national Essential Medicines Lists (EML). This keeps out almost all new drugs which are protected by patents. Cost-effectiveness comparisons need to be seen in the context of the possible use of TRIPS flexibilities -- especially compulsory licenses -- to drastically reduce actual costs of medicines.

The draft resolution does not adequately address the issues of technology transfer and local manufacturing capacity. There is a need to strengthen cooperation, especially among L&MICs, to significantly enhance capacity to manufacture medicines.

The establishment of the EML was a response to aggressive pharmaceutical marketing and pressure on LMICs to prioritise most recent and most highly priced drugs. WHO continues to face the challenge of adequately managing conflicts of interest that arise in its dealing with the pharmaceutical industry. PHM urges MS to remain cognizant of this recurring threat to WHO's independence while developing mechanisms to secure equitable and affordable access to medicines.

Thank you.

Contact:

Name: Susana Barria

E-Mail address or phone number: sbarria@phmovement.org