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**Statement**

**Full-day intersessional seminar on good practices, key challenges and new**

**developments relevant to access to medicines and vaccines**

 **Panel II- Global cooperation and measures to improve the universal access to health as a fundamental human right**

**8 December 2021**

Madame Moderator,

Barbados welcomes this discussion and takes the opportunity to underscore its support for the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We note that access to medicines is critical to achieving such enjoyment.

Barbados considers this seminar to be timely as it allows us to exchange good practices and discuss key challenges and new developments relevant to access to medicines and vaccines - particularly in the light of the ongoing and evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

At the outset, I wish to recognise the solidarity and goodwill shown by some Governments, individually, and working with multilateral institutions and Non Governmental Organisations to assist those, without adequate access to vaccines, to receive some respite during the current global health crisis.

These acts of generosity, however, serve to highlight the glaring deficiencies in the current system. It has been reported, for instance, that of the 1.8 billion COVID vaccine donations promised by rich nations, only 261 million doses, or 14 per cent, have been delivered to date. Additionally, western pharmaceutical companies have delivered only 12 per cent of the doses they allocated to COVAX, the initiative designed to help low- and middle-income countries get fair access to COVID vaccines.

There are several steps that may be taken to address these deficiencies. Last week, Barbados supported the agreement reached at the WHO to establish an intergovernmental negotiating body, to begin negotiating an international agreement, intended to ensure a more coherent and equitable response to future pandemics.

In addition, and more broadly, we advocate for the building production capacity in developing countries, allowing access to generic drugs and enhancing research and development relating to treatment for neglected diseases. We also encourage multilateral collaboration to strengthen national health systems, establish universal health coverage and ensure access to safe and efficacious medicines.

Barbados appreciates the role played and importance of the private companies that engage in the research development and sale of medicines and medical devices. The right of such entities and the individuals that direct them to obtain reasonable levels of profit from their activities is not challenged. We are mindful, however, that profits should not be placed before people.

We are, however, concerned that the practice persists where some pharmaceutical companies, with relatively low production costs, charge consumers far in excess of what is reasonable and what some consider as moral. Approaches to address this situation requires attention to human rights principles, the intellectual property regime for pharmaceutical products and progress in negotiations related to international trade.

Barbados supports the calls made for vaccines to be treated as global public goods, available to all, and especially those most in need. The discussion today clearly indicates that much remains to be done to address global inequalities and build social justice.

We must, therefore, continue to engage on this important task as we seek, collectively, to make the right to health a reality for all and build stronger more inclusive economies and societies.

Thank you.