

Joint Statement of the Global Health Security Agenda Steering Group

We, the representatives of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa) Steering Group, having met on May 11th, 13th, 19th, and 20th, 2020 to discuss the shared progress of the GHSa 2024 multilateral initiative, its contributions to facing the challenges of COVID-19, and future directions, hereby:

1. Acknowledge that the global community is facing tragic health, economic, and societal costs of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and that Polio and COVID-19 are concurrent Public Health Emergencies of International Concern;
2. Commend the extraordinary work, sacrifice, and commitment of communities and individuals during physical distancing efforts, including the life-saving actions of our front-line healthcare workers;
3. Underscore that countries continue to face multiple health security threats, and that the COVID-19 pandemic is highlighting existing known and previously unrecognized limitations in national, regional, and global capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats, whether they are naturally occurring, deliberate, or accidental in origin;
4. Recognize that GHSa has accelerated political and multisectoral support for health security preparedness, and that many countries, international organizations, and non-governmental and private sector entities have made tangible progress to strengthen critical core capacities since 2014, reinforced by the GHSa Pilot Assessments, World Health Organization Joint External Evaluations and National Action Plans for Health Security, and World Organisation for Animal Health PVS Pathway Evaluations;

5. Underscore our shared and continued commitment to contributing towards the GHSA 2024 target of more than 100 countries strengthening and improving capacity in at least five technical areas by 2024, which continues to be the most important need for country, regional and global preparedness against epidemics and pandemics; and
6. Emphasize that the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19 can only be stopped by global solidarity, cooperation across multiple sectors and international partners, through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, and stress our desire to cooperate on issues of shared concern in the COVID-19 pandemic and future infectious disease outbreaks, particularly those at the human-animal-environment interface.

We pledge to place the highest priority on combatting the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating its health, social, and economic impacts, while advancing strategic, recognized priorities and best practices for achieving and sustaining critical global health security and pandemic response capacities. We hereby reaffirm our commitment to:

1. Enhance global health security through timely and transparent international cooperation and policy coordination based on science and evidence, consistent with universal human rights, to stop the spread and mitigate the devastating public health and socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and future public health threats, including through implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), and encourage others to urgently do the same;
2. Continue to spearhead critical leadership aspects of health security response, such as transparency, timely and rapid information sharing, and capacity building on global

health security matters, including COVID-19 and other infectious disease outbreaks, through the GHSA mechanism and other existing mechanisms at regional and global levels;

3. Maintain preparedness against infectious disease threats such as COVID-19 as a leader-level priority, recognizing the importance not only of recovery and mitigation, but also of sustainable preparedness against known and unknown infectious disease risks in the post-pandemic period;
4. Work closely with the broader GHSA membership, international partners, and multisectoral communities to build networks and maintain vigilant country-level and regional-level preparedness and response capacities against the complex threats posed by infectious diseases regardless of origin, in support of the GHSA 2024 target, including demonstrating tangible commitments and progress at the 2020 Thailand GHSA Ministerial meeting; and
5. Demonstrate leadership to address the urgent need for preparedness and to provide coordination on needs among member countries against the next pandemic or epidemic threat as pertaining to global health security, being mindful of the concrete lessons learned and best practices shared during the COVID-19 response to ensure that the strategic actions of GHSA multilateral initiative help countries in the future.