

Mr Chairman,

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the criticality of fast, timely and unrestricted access to pathogen information in allowing the development of medical countermeasures and understanding the genomic epidemiology of the virus. Such should also hold true for any pathogen of epidemic or pandemic potential. The preamble to the Nagoya Protocol already recognises the need for ensuring access to human pathogens for preparedness and response, yet all too few mechanisms have been set up to enable this.

Fundamentally the logic of a bilateral ABS system for pathogen sharing does not fit the reality of pathogens and pandemics. Pathogens know no borders. Preparedness and response must also know no borders. The biopharmaceutical industry cannot develop safe and effective medical countermeasures without having timely access to pathogen samples. The industry is concerned that in the next zoonotic pandemic situation, ABS regulations may create a delay and disruption to the sharing of samples which will in turn cause an adverse impact on the development of diagnostics, vaccines and treatments.

IFPMA is a founding partner of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, which is a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. The biopharmaceutical industry contributes to ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of vaccines by actively joining this global end-to-end effort and doing what we do best: to develop and manufacture safe, efficacious and quality vaccines.

The manner in which the biopharmaceutical industry engages in research is through the sustainable use of biodiversity, we are not harming biodiversity, yet it is our research which is heavily impacted by the global patchwork of ABS regulations. By constraining our industry, ABS rules risk constraining our ability to 'sustainably use' biodiversity to cope with present and future public health problems.

Moving forwards, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework must recognise the realities of pandemic preparedness and response. We must be better prepared and have the requisite legal apparatus for ensuring an appropriate response to any future public health outbreak. The many laudable goals and targets aimed at halting biodiversity loss and promoting biodiversity restoration



statement

included in the Post-2020 GBF would be complemented by a provision recognising the need for timely and unrestricted pathogen sharing, especially in public health emergency situations.