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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on access to Covid-19 vaccines

UN Human Rights Council
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Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights' recent report on Covid-19 vaccines¹ and notes that the global allocation of these vaccines was one of the pandemic's worst examples of inequality. Low-income countries have shouldered this burden, receiving less than 3% of the global stock of vaccines.

Estimates show that Covid-19 vaccines prevented up to 19.8 million deaths in the first year of immunizations alone, reducing deaths globally by 63%. The impact of fair access to vaccines becomes particularly evident when this number is disaggregated – 41% of these averted deaths were in high-income countries, but only 1% in low-income countries.²

Ultimately, lack of timely access to vaccines coupled with weakened health systems, created a “two track pandemic”, where higher-income countries were emerging from the pandemic while lower-income countries plunged into multiple crisis.³

Amnesty's latest report “Inequalities of Pandemic Proportions: State and Pharma Failures Not to be Repeated,”⁴ offers four recommendations for states to build resilience against future pandemics.

¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic*, 3 January 2023, UN Doc. A/HRC/52/56.

² Oliver J Watson and others, “Global impact of the first year of COVID-19 vaccination: A mathematical modelling study”, 23 June 2023, *The Lancet Infectious Diseases*, Volume 22, Issue 9, [thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099\(22\)00320-6/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/laninf/article/PIIS1473-3099(22)00320-6/fulltext), pp. 1293-1302.

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, statement to the forty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, Geneva, 11 March 2022; UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Report: *Ecological Crisis, Climate Justice and Racial Justice*, 25 October 2022, UN Doc. A/77/549, para 2. See also UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Report: *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Fight Against Racial Discrimination*, 13 June–8 July 2022, Fiftieth session, Agenda item 9, UN Doc. A/HRC/50/60; and UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Report: *Global Extractivism and Racial Equality*, 14 May 2019, UN Doc. A/HRC/41/54.

⁴ Amnesty International, *Inequality of Pandemic Proportions: State and Pharma Failures Not to Be Repeated*, 8 March 2023, [amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/6518/2023/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/6518/2023/en/)

First, ensure fair global access to health products by respecting adequate and timely supply for all; second, reset global trade rules, ensuring that human rights are above intellectual property rights; third, push pharmaceutical companies to transfer knowledge and technology to other manufacturers so they can expand production, especially when public funding is involved; fourth, push pharmaceutical companies to make lifesaving health products affordable for all.

Finally, Amnesty International calls on states to ensure fair and meaningful participation during negotiations of the Pandemic Treaty, as well as to revise its text so it is fully consistent with states' obligations and companies' responsibilities regarding human rights.⁵

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁵ Amnesty International and others, "Joint Statement: Pandemic treaty zero draft misses the mark on human rights" (Index: IOR 40/6478/2023), 24 February 2023, [amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/6478/2023/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/6478/2023/en/)