Mr. President,

Amnesty International welcomes the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights’ recent report on Covid-19 vaccines 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.

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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.