

IDSA Statement for 148th WHO Executive Board Meeting

Agenda Item 12: Immunization Agenda 2030

The Global Health Council, Global Health Technologies Coalition and Infectious Diseases Society of America commend the World Health Organization and member states on progress made toward achieving global immunization targets.

Despite these efforts, coverage of essential vaccines only increased from 84 percent in 2010 to 86 percent in 2018, leaving nearly 20 million children unvaccinated every year. Polio has not been eradicated, and the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undo decades' worth of progress. Dozens of countries have reported disruptions to vital immunization programs, including at least 30 measles programs at risk of being cancelled, which could fuel outbreaks this year and beyond. Improved immunization programs can help counter rising rates of antimicrobial resistance by reducing the need to use antimicrobial drugs, extending the efficacy of existing medicines.

Vaccines are an essential prevention tool, and member states must invest in research and development for new vaccine technologies coupled with increased capacity-building for the uptake of existing and new vaccines. We do not have all the vaccines we need to prevent diseases that threaten health and well-being globally.

We call on WHO and member states to focus on the full spectrum of innovations that support immunization programs, from storage, to new vaccine administration infrastructure, to co-administration with other health interventions, to novel approaches to service delivery. Vaccines are only useful if they reach those who need them, and many different types of innovation are necessary to achieve universal access. Many communities have historically suffered harms at the hands of medical and scientific institutions, breaking the bonds of trust needed for vaccination efforts. Global increase in internet access has also provided a platform for the anti-vaccination movement. Rising skepticism about vaccines and misinformation and disinformation disseminated through social media could sabotage immunization initiatives if not properly addressed and contained. Global efforts are needed to promote vaccine confidence to ensure vaccine uptake and address all questions relating to vaccine safety and efficacy.

We are encouraged to see the Director General's report noting the important role non-state actors can play in strengthening vaccine strategies. As infectious diseases and global health professionals, we stand ready to work with WHO on developing new vaccine strategies, strengthening the vaccine pipeline and identifying innovative solutions to ensure global uptake of these critical health interventions to mitigate global health challenges.