PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2023

PS1.2

VACCINES, THERAPEUTICS, DIAGNOSTICS, AND OTHER SUPPLIES: INNOVATION, ACCESS AND EQUITY

| BACKGROUND

Control over most of the production and distribution of countermeasures (vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics and other critical supplies) related to prevention and mitigation of health impacts in pandemics, as seen with COVID-19, rests with a small number of countries. National security and economic interests, not epidemiology, dominated decision-making leading to shortages in countries lacking the wealth and fiscal capacities to compete in gaining timely access to such goods.

International organizations and mechanisms, including the Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), launched by WHO and partners with three pillars on Diagnostics, Therapeutics, and Vaccines (COVAX), have made strong contributions to global health, but have limitations that were exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The WHO mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub initiative offers a basis for assessment of possibilities and pitfalls in ensuring global access to pandemic-related health tools, and how limitations of the governance structure of ACT-A should inform WHO's roles in overseeing future equitable distribution.

The politicization of science leads to people distrusting some health tools, especially vaccines, resulting in poor uptake and increased morbidity and mortality. Moreover, misinformation and disinformation about the safety and efficacy of new vaccines lead to limited acceptance and uptake in many settings, both rich and poor; however, the impact is greater among poor and rural populations.

The Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement of 1995 requires member countries to make patents available for any invention, whether products or processes, in all fields of technology without discrimination, subject to the normal tests of novelty, inventiveness, and industrial applicability. There is growing consensus that the 2022 TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines failed to remedy long-standing concerns with the role of intellectual property rights (IPR) in access to health innovations (pandemic-related or otherwise) and that governments in their research funding or advance purchase agreements must place conditionalities on private sector IPR and market decision-making to ensure that there is equitable access to such products globally.

The global health governance is often constrained in addressing global health challenges separate from the interests of large donor members. The broader context is a need to examine the reform of multistakeholder global health governance with reference to more equitable participation from LMICs (particularly LDCs) and civil society organizations. Several major initiatives developed by ACT-A stakeholders, G20, G7, IPPPR, and INB-global treaty, will shed light on the future global health landscape. An important issue to take on is the dilemma between multilateralism underpinning a globalized world and national interest, self-determination; how to integrate into global and national governance.

| OBJECTIVES

This session will examine issues highlighted in the background and propose recommendations and improvements related to:

- The centralized control of essential products in the hands of a few high-income counties
- The limited voice of LMIC in global health governance
- The West-East polarization of global health decision-making and supply chains
- Mistrust of vaccines and therapeutics, often based on misinformation and disinformation
- The limitations of the current TRIPS agreement

The session will reflect on the lessons learned from the COVID pandemic and look into future mechanisms and changes at global, regional, country, and sub-national levels, enabling better prevention, preparedness, and response.

Panelist

Thomas Cueni

Director General

International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)
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Thomas Cueni has led IFPMA since 2017, during which time he has been instrumental in establishing cross sectoral programs designed to tackle the biggest global health challenges.

This includes establishing the $1bn AMR Action Fund to support the development of new antibiotics; as Chair of the AMR Alliance; as a member of the Board of City Cancer Challenge; and as the industry's representative on the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator.

Leading the IFPMA through the COVID-19 pandemic, Thomas galvanised the industry to develop the Berlin Declaration – the pharmaceutical industry's blueprint to deliver equitable access to vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics in future pandemics. Thomas is Chair of the Business at OECD Health Committee and serves as Industry Co-Chair of the APEC Biopharmaceutical Working Group on Ethics. He is also a member of the Business Advisory Group established by the Director General of the World Trade Organization.

Prior to joining IFPMA, Thomas was Secretary General of Interpharma, the trade association representing Switzerland's research-based pharmaceutical industry; Secretary of the Dolder Group, precursor of what's now the BCR; and served on the Board of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA). Thomas began his career as a journalist, as London correspondent for the Basler Zeitung and Der Bund, before serving as a Swiss diplomat in Paris (OECD) and Vienna (IAEA, UNIDO).

Thomas has a master's degree in economics from the University of Basel and another in politics from the London School of Economics. He also studied at the Geneva Graduate Institute for International Studies.