

Revamping the GHSA Workforce Development & Medical Countermeasures Action Package

GHTC proposal to address R&D capacity gaps

With cases topping 27 million globally, COVID-19 response efforts continue to dominate the global agenda for world leaders. While officials wrestle with addressing the immediate crisis that has already claimed over 900,000 lives worldwide, the impact on public health and national economies will be felt for years to come. The world simply was not ready for this novel coronavirus. Being prepared, whether for COVID-19 or the next outbreak, requires having both strong health systems in place and the right technologies on hand to prevent an outbreak from becoming a deadly crisis.

Yet the pandemic has made clear that there are severe gaps in global health security preparedness. Scientists around the globe are racing to develop and deploy new diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, and other tools in record time to flatten the curve and shore up overburdened and fragile health systems. Yet these efforts have been hampered by limited clinical trial capacity, laboratory infrastructure, under-resourced regulatory systems, quality-assured manufacturing capability, and poor delivery systems.

While the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) has set in motion vital improvements in health systems, a key component needed for the world to be truly prepared to tackle health emergencies is notably missing from its framework. As currently structured, the GHSA

Action Packages include no explicit commitments to strengthen the research and development (R&D) capacities of participant nations. This is necessary and critical to ensure the world is equipped with the broad range of health technologies—including vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and other health technologies such as oxygen therapies and personal protective equipment—needed to tackle health threats, from the next infectious disease outbreak to the rise of antimicrobial resistance.

Achieving improved health security will ultimately require new health technologies, and developing those tools will require a supportive policy environment in all nations. As the leading global forum for countries to advance collective action on health security, GHSA has driven substantial progress in strengthening the ability of nations to detect, prevent, and respond to outbreaks.

As GHSA looks to reaffirm its 2019–2024 framework at the Ministerial in November, the **Global Health Technologies Coalition (GHTC) calls on GHSA countries to revamp the scope of the Workforce Development & Medical Countermeasures Action Package** and expand its mandate to **explicitly embed support for global health R&D of diagnostics and medical countermeasures** as part of its core priorities.

This refocused Action Package will serve as a platform that convenes countries, international organizations, industry, academia, and civil society to advance shared objectives in four main areas: country-led clinical trials, country-global R&D linkages, national and regional regulatory strengthening, and cross-initiative coordination. Countries will be supported as appropriate to develop and implement operational roadmaps—based on international standards, guidelines, and successful existing models—that specify the actions necessary to strengthen their national health security R&D ecosystems. The Action Package will also actively coordinate with other relevant Action Packages such as those on antimicrobial resistance, biosafety & biosecurity, and laboratory systems.

The revamped Action Package will allow GHSA to address some of the preparedness gaps and enhance countries' capacities to do the following:

- Conduct clinical trials for tools to combat emerging and reemerging infectious diseases.
- Provide incentives to product developers to develop technologies for diseases and products that lack a commercial market.
- Speed products through appropriate regulatory approvals to allow their quick uptake.

- Collaborate regionally and globally on infectious disease research.
- Evaluate in-country and regional research and development capacity to develop diagnostics and medical countermeasures.
- Develop national and regional plans to manufacture or procure vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and other technologies like personal protective equipment and oxygen therapies to combat outbreaks.

With proactive country leadership, we can ensure that the world has a comprehensive plan to combat epidemics and that all nations are better prepared with the tools needed to detect, prevent, and respond to the next outbreak.