



WOMEN LEADERS UNITE IN CALL FOR URGENT ACTION AS CHAMPIONS FOR TESTING TO EXIT COVID-19

Distinguished women leaders call for investment in COVID-19 testing innovation and access to be urgently ramped up, ahead of upcoming *Global Goal: Unite for Our Future* global pledging event

Geneva, Switzerland; Brussels, Belgium & London, UK – 22 June 2020 – The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), Women Political Leaders (WPL) and G20 Health and Development Partnership (G20HDP) announced today that distinguished women leaders in politics and healthcare with proven success in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic are calling on world leaders to ramp up investment in light of the massive funding gap for COVID-19 testing innovation and access. The call comes just days before a global pledging event that will take place on 27 June 2020, *Global Goal: Unite for Our Future*.

The leaders are calling on the global community to prioritize testing for COVID-19 and keep testing high on political agendas, now and in the future. Testing for COVID-19 is actionable today, is crucial for containment strategies that allow economies to reopen, and will be key to development and deployment of treatments and vaccines once these are available. The powerful call to action stresses the urgent need for investment to accelerate diagnostic innovation and equitable access everywhere. The necessity for simple, affordable, high-quality, rapid tests is global, but particularly relevant to low- and middle-income countries that do not have the infrastructure needed to implement aggressive, sustained testing with today's complex, laboratory-based tests. Ensuring the right tests are available where they are needed now is critical to lessen the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the future.

The call to action was the result of a webinar co-hosted by WPL, G20HDP, and FIND as co-convenor of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) Diagnostics Partnership. The event rallied the support of an international community of women leaders in healthcare and politics to share their experiences and recommendations on how to realize the potential of testing to save millions of lives, and to inform the safe reopening of countries around the world.

Catharina Boehme, CEO of FIND and co-chair of the ACT-A Diagnostics Partnership: “Today, we do not have simple, affordable, high-quality, rapid tests that can be used by everyone, everywhere. We have a small window of opportunity that will allow us to ramp up the work of the ACT-A Diagnostics Partnership, develop the tests we need, and get them rolled out at scale. Without investment in COVID-19 tests now, we will fail collectively.”

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway (1981–1996) and Director General of the World Health Organization (1998–2003), and Member of The Elders: “Testing worldwide is vital to contain the

humanitarian and economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. We need leaders to engage in global solidarity efforts to ensure testing is available to all who need it.”

H.E. Aminata Touré, President of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council of Senegal, and Former Prime Minister of Senegal: “Health is a human right. As a FIND Goodwill Ambassador for Affordable Testing, I champion testing to help states build their diagnostic capacity to identify, isolate and treat the virus. Our international coalition is clear that the time has come for the global community to support affordable, quality diagnostics in every country at next week’s funding conference and the upcoming G20 Health and Finance Ministers meeting in September.”

H.E. Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Social Affairs Commissioner of the African Union: “African women are leading in government, in society and stand at the forefront of delivering healthcare. Ours is the voice and experience necessary to ensure all communities can access the necessary testing to keep families safe and economies open.”

Annette Kennedy, President of the International Council of Nurses: “Effective, timely testing is essential to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurses on the frontlines against the virus are vulnerable through lack of testing and data on infection rates and deaths. We believe half a million healthcare workers have been infected and thousands may have died. Systematic testing and data collection are imperative if we want to protect nurses and prevent a second wave.”

Hatice Küçük, Executive Director of The G20 Health and Development Partnership: “Testing is the solution that we have available now and for getting treatments right. Testing is a human right, so we need to make it available to vulnerable communities who need it most. Testing is a democratic tool that encourages political leaders to be transparent and accountable to the public. If we want to contain COVID-19 and future pandemics to come, we can no longer treat this type of crisis as ‘disaster relief’.”

Silvana Koch-Mehrin, President & Founder of WPL: “Testing must be championed by leaders, and made available to all their constituents. The importance of women’s representation in the global response to COVID-19 is evident. Today’s event provides an opportunity for women leaders, as champions of the fight against COVID-19, to convene, share ideas, needs, and solutions. Our future lies in the collective action we take today.”

Current efforts to curate an international collective response to COVID-19 and develop equitable access to affordable, high-performing testing are underway through the ACT-A Diagnostics Partnership, but must be strengthened. Around the world, women leaders have become champions of testing and the fight against COVID-19. Such efforts are vital to the recovery of all countries, maintaining current and future global health security, protecting the health advances of recent decades, and the continued advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A recording of the webinar will be available as from Tuesday, 23 June 2020, here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_LMI_W_biQTCaruy-k72oLw

Official hashtags: #TestToExit #COVID19 #GlobalGoalUnite

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About Women Political Leaders

WPL is the global network of female politicians. The mission of WPL is to increase both the number and the influence of women in political leadership positions. WPL members are women in political office – Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliaments, Mayors. Membership is free and members are honoured by their participation. WPL strives in all its activities to demonstrate the impact of more women in political leadership, for the global better.

<https://www.womenpoliticalleaders.org/about/>

About The G20 Health & Development Partnership

G20HDP is an advocacy organisation that aims to ensure that G20 countries are coordinating their health innovation strategy to tackle the growing burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases globally to promote the delivery of SDG 3. The Partnership emerged as an informal coalition of like-minded organisations during the G20 Presidency in Germany in 2017 respecting the objectives of SDG 17. The Partnership comprises 16 cross-sectoral partners including product development partnerships, non-for-profit and international organisations, public-private partnerships, pharmaceuticals, associations, research institutes, and academia. <https://www.ssdhub.org/>

About FIND

FIND is a global non-profit organization that drives innovation in the development and delivery of diagnostics to combat major diseases affecting the world's poorest populations. Our work bridges R&D to access, overcoming scientific barriers to technology development; generating evidence for regulators and policy-makers; addressing market failures; and enabling accelerated uptake and access to diagnostics in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Since 2003, we have been instrumental in the development of 24 new diagnostic tools used in 150 LMICs. Over 50 million FIND-supported products have been provided to our target markets since the start of 2015. A WHO Collaborating Centre, we work with more than 200 academic, industry, governmental, and civil society partners worldwide, on over 70 active projects that cross six priority disease areas. FIND is committed to a future in which diagnostics underpin treatment decisions and provide the foundation for disease surveillance, control and prevention. For more information, please visit www.finddx.org

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