

THE CRITICAL NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

JOINT STATEMENT OF ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES AND MEDICINE

As a novel coronavirus spreads throughout the world and the number of cases and deaths continues to rise, almost no country or community remains untouched by this rapidly evolving threat. Dramatic and urgent actions are underway at all levels in our societies to limit the spread of COVID-19, identify new infections, take care of the sick and prevent death, reduce social and economic disruptions, and meet basic human needs. Looming uncertainties remain and much needs to be done. At this critical time we, G-Science Academies of Science and of Medicine from across the globe, including academies of the G7 countries, are engaging within our countries in many ways. But we all believe it essential to emphasize, together, the URGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, in several dimensions:

1. Rapid, accurate, and transparent international communication about the unfolding epidemiology of this novel viral disease, including patterns of transmission, incubation period and lethality, and the efficacy of various methods of intervention.
2. Real-time sharing of detailed scientific information about the virus, the pathophysiology of the disease it causes and the human immunologic response, its origins, genetics, and mutations, and coordinated activities to advance knowledge in all of these areas.
3. Sharing of information about research and development on medical products to deal with the disease, along with collaborative research efforts to advance this vital R&D.
4. In recognition of our mutual reliance, coordination and alignment of regulatory and manufacturing processes and quality standards required to accelerate availability of reliable personal protective equipment, diagnostic testing devices, and medical treatment capacity.
5. Collaborative efforts to undertake rapid but evidence-based analysis of emerging concerns or discrete program and policy issues that may emerge as the global pandemic progresses
6. Coordinated development of consistent evidence-based guidance, messaging and communications for the public and policymakers in rapidly-changing circumstances.

International cooperation and information sharing in all of these dimensions will be particularly critical in countries and regions where the public health and health care infrastructure is not adequate, where the disease is yet to fully impact, and where social, economic and health conditions indicate extreme vulnerability to rapid spread of the disease and weakness of response capacity. This is particularly true for populations from developing regions of the world, including Africa, Asia and Latin America, as well as vulnerable regions of large urban conglomerates.

It is also urgent to understand, project, and prepare for the many dimensions of economic and social impact of the disease and on impending humanitarian needs. Bilateral development assistance organizations and international development banks will be critical players, as will private foundations that have played important roles in international crisis situations. The World Health Organization is of central importance in many of these dimensions and needs the strong support and cooperation from all of our countries.

Humanity has been repeatedly endangered by infectious diseases and, each time, has overcome the crisis. We will continue to face serious infectious disease threats in the future, from pandemic influenza to drug-resistant infections. Concerted efforts are needed to address the critical connections between environmental degradation and disease vectors in order to prevent future outbreaks of novel pathogens. The current tragedy of COVID-19 should galvanize us to dramatically strengthen our efforts to prevent and control infectious diseases, so that human societies have improved states of readiness and increased resilience to infectious disease calamities.

This is a statement of the fifteen academies listed below. We are also members of the InterAcademy Partnership of Academies of Sciences and of Medicine (IAP), with participants from over 100 countries around the world, including countries in the most difficult circumstances. The IAP member academies can play an important role in their own countries and through international and regional cooperation, working in close collaboration with government, academia and the private sector, in order to overcome the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Signed:

Academia Brasileira de Ciências, Brazil
Royal Society of Canada, Canada
Académie des Sciences, France
Deutsche Akademie der Naturforscher 'Leopoldina', Germany
Global Young Academy
Indian National Science Academy, India
Indonesian Academy of Sciences, Indonesia
Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Italy
Science Council of Japan, Japan
Nigerian Academy of Science, Nigeria
Korean Academy of Science and Technology, Republic of Korea
Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia
Royal Society, United Kingdom
National Academy of Sciences, United States of America
National Academy of Medicine, United States of America