



72nd WHO World Health Assembly – May 2019
Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) statement on agenda item 11.7:
Access to medicines and vaccines, Document A72/17

Speaker: Gaelle Krikorian

MSF welcomes the road map and the holistic approach it provides for WHO's work on access to medicines. We are here to ask Member States to take a specific step to deliver on the road map's potential.

Exorbitant medicine prices limit MSF's ability to provide the best possible treatment for people in our care. The same holds true for governments represented here today. This week, Member States are negotiating an important resolution on medicines transparency – covering four areas where full transparency is urgently needed: research and development (R&D) costs, clinical trial results, medicines patents, and the real prices of medicines.

This resolution could help save lives by setting strong norms and standards to help correct the unacceptable power imbalance that exists between those who need and purchase medicines – and those who produce and sell them.

Pharmaceutical corporations do not set medicine prices with the objective of ensuring access for all people in need. They set them in order to maximise profit, which leads to rationing of medicines when patients and health systems cannot afford the prices they charge. When governments sign confidentiality agreements on prices, they give companies the upper hand in price negotiations. But countries do not have to consent to being blindfolded. There are no legal barriers that mandate this damaging secrecy.

Transparency can help level the playing field and give governments the information they need to negotiate fairly and responsibly for people and their health. We ask Member States to require transparency on the prices countries pay for medicines, the mark-ups companies charge, and companies' production costs. And governments need to know who pays what for R&D – how much investment is really covered by companies, and how much is underwritten by taxpayers and non-profit groups.

MSF urges Member States to adopt a bold and clear resolution to set strong standards that mandate transparency on medicine prices and R&D costs.