

## JOINT STATEMENT

# G7 LEADERS MUST PROVIDE IMMEDIATE SUPPORT TO AVERT MORE COVID-19 OXYGEN SHORTAGES AND RELATED DEATHS

5 May 2021

The **Every Breath Counts Coalition** and the **Access to Medicine Foundation** call on G7 leaders to take immediate action to ensure that low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have the medical oxygen and other medicines they need to treat all patients during the pandemic.

G7 leaders should engage directly with the major medical gas, oxygen plant and concentrator companies to ramp up supply; to invest in the **Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce**<sup>1</sup> to increase the support international health and development agencies can provide; and to open up an “oxygen dialogue” with political leaders in the worst-affected LMICs to prevent a repeat of the tragedy that has occurred in India.

The need for medical oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients across all LMICs has tripled in the last month and has now reached a massive 28.3 million cubic meters per day, the equivalent of 4 million large cylinders. The annual cost of meeting this need is estimated at \$US6.5 billion.<sup>2</sup>

Without adequate supplies of medical oxygen, COVID-19 case fatality rates will remain high as currently oxygen is one of the only treatments available for COVID-19 patients in LMICs and vaccine rollout is slow. To date, only five LMICs (Bhutan, Maldives, Serbia, Mongolia, and Dominica) have managed to protect more than 20% of their populations with one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>3</sup>

The G7 is well-positioned to engage with the leading medical gas companies as they are headquartered in G7 countries, including Air Liquide (France), Messer Group (Germany), SOL Group (Italy), Taiyo Nippon Sanso Corporation (Japan), Linde Group (United Kingdom), and Air Products (USA). G7 engagement with all of the major medical gas companies can ensure coordinated action to help end the oxygen crisis in India and prevent others.

G7 countries should also invest in the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce so that international global health and development agencies can strengthen the support they are providing to LMIC governments. Co-led by Unitaïd and the Wellcome Trust, and part of the ACT-A therapeutics pillar, the Taskforce is currently providing oxygen and medicines to support countries. But much more is needed as COVID-19 cases rapidly rise and the imperative to respond quickly becomes more critical.

---

<sup>1</sup> Taskforce members include Unitaïd, Wellcome Trust, WHO,\* UNICEF, Global Fund, World Bank, UNOPS, Save the Children, Every Breath Counts, CHAI, and PATH, as well \*including WHO Biomedical Procurement Consortium members ALIMA, BMGF, IMC, MSF, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS, USAID, and WFP.

<sup>2</sup> See the **COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker** by PATH, CHAI, and Every Breath Counts, 4 May, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> See **Our World in Data**, 4 May 2021.

An initial immediate injection of \$US200 million from the G7 for an ACT-A Emergency Oxygen Fund would enable the ACT-A to respond quickly (within days) to LMIC requests to alleviate imminent medical oxygen shortages and related deaths. An emergency fund must have the flexibility to procure bulk liquid oxygen, oxygen plants, cylinders, concentrators, and related technologies and support governments to supply trained healthcare workers and biomedical engineers to use and maintain the equipment safely. There are many countries now at risk of oxygen shortages who may require this type of fast support in the coming weeks (see table below).

It is also vital that G7 leaders communicate directly with the LMIC government leaders at risk of oxygen shortages, to monitor the situation daily, have clear sight on country needs, and mobilize quickly to prevent the shortages that have caused so many deaths in India. India has shown us how critical it is that health and finance ministers in these at-risk countries have a direct line to international support before a crisis emerges.

Greater G7 investments in medical oxygen will continue to save lives beyond the pandemic, especially among newborns, children, women in childbirth, and adults with communicable and/or non-communicable diseases. This would significantly increase the impact of G7 leadership and investments in global health. Medical oxygen is truly an investment that will strengthen all health systems and prepare countries for future respiratory pandemics, which are expected to occur.

---

## Signees:

The Every Breath Counts Coalition and the Access to Medicine Foundation, with Aga Khan University, Amnesty International, Association of Support and Information to Relatives and Patients with Pneumonia (NEUMOAI), Cintia Oliviera Dantas, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Emergence Creative, Global Alliance for Surgical, Obstetric, Trauma, and Anaesthesia Care (G4 Alliance), Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN), Global Minnesota, International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases, Gadian Health Systems, Lifebox, Malaria Consortium, Masimo, MGPS Acuitas, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 19 to Zero, Pandemic Action Network, Panorama, PATH, Right to Health Action, Sabin Vaccine Institute, Save the Children, Union des Amis Socio Culturels d'Action en Développement (UNASCAD), University of Auckland, Village Reach.

## Contacts:

**Leith Greenslade**, Coordinator, **Every Breath Counts Coalition**. The Every Breath Counts is a coalition of 50 United Nations and multilateral health and development agencies, companies, foundations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions supporting low- and middle-income countries to reduce deaths from pneumonia, including from COVID-19. Email [leith@justactions.org](mailto:leith@justactions.org).

**Jayasree Iyer**, Executive Director, **Access to Medicine Foundation**. The Access to Medicine Foundation is an independent organization that incentivizes the pharmaceutical industry to ramp up access to medicine gaps in low and middle income countries by using a multi-stakeholder consensus model. The Foundation defines key roles for the companies and tracks progress on opportunities for action on 82 diseases, including pandemics. Email [jiyer@accesstomedicinefoundation.org](mailto:jiyer@accesstomedicinefoundation.org).

<b>COVID-19 OXYGEN “Hotspots”</b>	<b>COVID-19 Oxygen Need (cubic meters per day)</b>	<b>COVID-19 Vaccination (% population one dose)</b>	<b>OXYGEN “Hotspots”</b>	<b>COVID-19 Oxygen Need (cubic meters per day)</b>	<b>COVID-19 Vaccination (% population one dose)</b>
India	16,148,433	9.25%	Palestine	50,929	3.33%
Brazil	2,686,272	14.05%	Guatemala	49,542	0.95%
Turkey	1,841,098	16.52%	Ethiopia	48,516	NA
Argentina	1,002,480	15.6%	Cuba	48,324	NA
Iran	942,661	1.02%	Egypt	44,093	0.64%
Colombia	782,227	6.79%	Kenya	26,793	1.59%
Ukraine	407,219	1.73%	Armenia	25,335	0.02%
Philippines	380,916	1.54%	Cambodia	24,780	8.77%
Peru	341,397	3.43%	Uzbekistan	16,579	1.79%
Iraq	305,345	0.74%	Madagascar	15,788	NA
Pakistan	233,181	0.95%	Kyrgyzstan	14,146	0.41%
Nepal	188,499	7.18%	Cabo Verde	12,770	0.39%
Malaysia	133,981	2.83%	Angola	8,615	1.39%
Bangladesh	128,767	3.53%	Afghanistan	7,964	0.62%
Kazakhstan	116,954	6.89%	Syria	5,442	0.01%
Paraguay	104,514	1.3%	Guyana	5,284	15.76%
Thailand	88,128	1.58%	PNG	3,841	0.03%
Ecuador	87,891	4.49%	Timor Leste	3,640	0.02%
Tunisia	81,333	2.58%	LaoPDR	3,328	1.73%
Costa Rica	72,544	10.57%	Suriname	2,841	6.81%
Azerbaijan	62,831	9.62%	Mali	2,448	0.25%
Georgia	55,513	1.14%	Somalia	2,335	0.74%
Sri Lanka	54,715	4.33%	Guinea	2,379	0.73%
Venezuela	54,657	0.88%	CAR	1,752	NA
Mongolia	52,838	31.65%	Yemen	1,584	NA

Updated 4 May 2021

Sources: PATH/CHAI/Every Breath Counts COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker and Our World in Data Vaccination

