



### 3. The Panel's call for immediate actions to stop the COVID-19 pandemic

The Panel is *deeply concerned and alarmed* about the current persistent high levels of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, which are driving illness and deaths, and about the development of virus variants all of which continue to impose an intolerable burden on societies and economies.

**Countries have varied significantly in their application of public health measures** to keep the spread of the virus in check. Some have sought to contain the epidemic aggressively and drive towards elimination; some have aimed at virus suppression; and some have aimed just to mitigate the worst impacts. Countries with the ambition to aggressively contain and stop the spread whenever and wherever it occurs have shown that this is possible. Given what is known already, all countries should apply public health measures consistently and at the scale the epidemiological situation requires. Vaccination alone will not end this pandemic. It must be combined with testing, contact-tracing, isolation, quarantine, masking, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and effective communication with the public.

Alongside these non-pharmaceutical measures, vaccine rollout needs to be scaled up urgently and equitably across the world. A number of effective vaccines are now approved. Current production capacity, however, is stretched close to its limits, and vaccination coverage is far from being at the scale needed to reduce the burden of illness and curb transmission globally.

**The uneven access to vaccination is one of today's pre-eminent global challenges.** High-income countries have over 200% population coverage of vaccine doses, obtained mainly through bilateral deals with manufacturers to secure existing and future stocks. In many cases low- and middle-income countries have been shut out of these arrangements. In the poorest countries, at the time of finalising this report, fewer than 1% of people have had a single dose of vaccine. The COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX Facility), rapidly established with the intention of ensuring global, equitable access, is making good progress but has been hampered in that goal by a lack of sufficient funds and by vaccine nationalism, and now, vaccine diplomacy.



*There are 5.7 billion people in the world aged 16 and over. All need access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines. This is not some aspiration for tomorrow – it is urgent, now.*