

### Top news:

- President Trump announced to halt the country's funding to the WHO sparking outrage by leading health experts, governments around the world and the UN chief António Guterres who reiterate that the WHO is critical in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. CDC confirmed that they would continue to work closely with the WHO. Dr Tedros expressed his regret for the US decision to withdraw funding and strongly reaffirmed the principles of the organisation's founding ideals and constitution "to protect and promote the health of the world's people."
- WHO announces it has convened groups of clinicians to look at the impact of corticosteroids and other anti-inflammatory drugs on treatment outcomes.
- French President Emmanuel Macron highlights that treatment for coronavirus should be accessible to Africa at the same time that countries such as France get it and IP rights should not stand in the way. Activists voice fears that pharmaceutical companies will ultimately make the decisions about who lives and who dies.
- Finance ministers and central bank governors from G20 agree to freeze poor countries' debts to add \$20B for pandemic fight.
- The EU Commission will host a virtual pledging conference on May 4 to raise money to fill "immediate funding gaps" in vaccine research.
- Abbott launched a coronavirus blood test and plans to ramp up manufacturing to produce 20 million tests in June; Merck Supports Jenner Institute to develop manufacturing platform which allows large-scale manufacturing in record time & Shionogi announced R&D efforts into COVID-19 therapeutics, vaccines and antibody test kits

### WHO FUNDING FREEZE

- **The Guardian:** ['Crime against humanity': Trump condemned for WHO funding freeze.](#) Leading health experts have labelled Donald Trump's decision to cut funding to the WHO as a "crime against humanity" and a "damnable" act that will cost lives. The move also drew a rebuke from the head of the United Nations, who said the WHO was "absolutely critical to the world's efforts to win the war against Covid-19".
- **STAT:** [CDC director distances himself from Trump's WHO criticism, saying the agencies 'continue to have' strong relationship](#)
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce:** [U.S. Chamber Statement on the World Health Organization.](#) "The Chamber supports a reformed but functional World Health Organization, and U.S. leadership and involvement are essential to ensuring its transparency and accountability going forward. However, cutting the WHO's funding during the COVID-19 pandemic is not in U.S. interests given the organization's critical role assisting other countries — particularly in the developing world — in their response."

### GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPACT / RESPONSE

- **Financial Express:** [ADB hikes Covid-19 financial aid to \\$20 billion for member nations.](#) The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has tripled the size of its COVID-19 response package for member countries to \$20 billion. It earlier announced it would extend \$6.5-billion financial aid to help its developing member countries (DMCs), including India, counter the

"macroeconomic and health impacts" caused by the pandemic. Of this, around \$2 billion will be provided to the private sector.

- **G20 - Politico (Paywall):** [G20 freezes poor countries' debts to add \\$20B for pandemic fight](#). G20 countries plan to suspend poor countries' debt payments for a year, freeing up \$20 billion to spend on treating the coronavirus pandemic and shore up their economies. The finance chiefs endorsed the International Monetary Fund's \$1 trillion lending program, along with a \$200 billion program from the World Bank and other development lenders. Ministers called on the IMF to consider "additional tools." But on proposals to increase Special Drawing Rights for countries in need, the group's statement said, "there was no consensus on the issue."
- **Financial Times:** [Governments face 'massive' rise in public debt, IMF warns](#). The increase in borrowing by governments around the world as a result of the coronavirus pandemic will be "massive", the IMF said, forecasting that population lockdowns and economic contractions would push budget deficits to well above peak levels during the financial crisis.
- **Reuters:** [Next budget must be Europe's answer to coronavirus crisis, EU chiefs say](#). Ursula von der Leyen said that a larger seven-year budget should be Europe's response a pandemic that will sharply shrink economic output this year in EU countries. The Commission is currently discussing how big the next budget will be, how to spend it and to what extent it could be used as a financial vehicle to raise more money for recovery.

#### PRICING, ACCESS & INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

- **Politico (Paywall)/ France Tv Info:** [Macron: Africa has to have access to coronavirus treatment at the same time as France](#). The day a treatment for coronavirus becomes available, it should be accessible to Africa at the same time that countries such as France get it, President Emmanuel Macron told Radio France Internationale. "So no talk of intellectual property, no talk of delays, no talk of money," Macron said. "We put ourselves in the position to do it."
- **Middle East Monitor:** [Turkey makes coronavirus treatment free](#). Following a presidential decree made yesterday, treatment for coronavirus in Turkey's public hospitals will be completely free of charge. Patients will be provided protective gear and testing, in addition to medicine, even if they failed to pay state insurance.
- **The Guardian:** [We'll find a treatment for coronavirus – but drug companies will decide who gets it](#). *Opinion by Achal Prabhala & Ellen T'Hoën*. The authors argue that COVID-19 will most likely to end in the same way that every pandemic ends: treatments and vaccines will be buried in a thicket of patents – and pharmaceutical companies will ultimately make the decisions about who lives and who dies.
- **ATM:** [New products alone are not enough. Pharma can do more to halt COVID-19](#). *Opinion by Danny J. Edwards, Research Programme Manager, Access to Medicine Foundation*. He says that ensuring medical products for COVID-19, once being approved, are made widely accessible will be the central issue. People in more vulnerable countries must not be left behind. To stimulate pharmaceutical companies to act now, the author collated a non-exhaustive list of positive actions already being taken by companies.

#### MANUFACTURING & SUPPLY OF MEDICINES

- **Financial Times:** [Coronavirus shortages prompt Australia to bring manufacturing home](#). Australia has been forced to rethink its industrial policy after an acute shortage of ventilators and protective equipment exposed what critics labelled its "dependence" on

China. As part of the country's effort to tackle its coronavirus outbreak, Canberra has promised to nurture local manufacturing to ensure it is less reliant on global supply chains.

### COVID-19: FOCUS ON AFRICA

- **Financial Times:** [Africa's scientists learn from past epidemics to fight Covid-19](#). African scientists and health officials are taking on coronavirus by adapting technology and systems developed to fight diseases such as tuberculosis and polio, an effort they hope will help compensate for the continent's lack of critical care infrastructure.

### VACCINE/ TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT & DONATIONS

#### IFPMA members

- **Reuters:** [Abbott launches antibody test for coronavirus, plans to deliver 20 million tests by June](#). Abbott launched a coronavirus blood test that could show whether a person has been infected and plans to ramp up manufacturing to produce 20 million tests in June.
- **Merck:** [Merck Supports Jenner Institute to Reach First Milestone in Covid-19 Vaccine Manufacturing](#). Recently developed manufacturing platform allows large-scale manufacturing & joint team reduced process development time to two months from a year – a critical step to manufacturing Covid-19 vaccine at scale.
- **Shionogi:** [Shionogi Announces Commitment to Fight COVID-19](#). Shionogi initiated a collaborative research effort to identify drugs active against COVID-19 with the Hokkaido University Research Center for Zoonosis Control. UMN Pharma Inc., a group company of Shionogi, is pursuing the discovery and development of a recombinant protein vaccine for COVID-19 in a project supported by the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development. Shionogi has also just entered into an agreement with Micro Blood Science to test an antibody test kit.
- **CNBC:** [US clinical trials of hydroxychloroquine hit 'warp speed,' could show in weeks whether it works on coronavirus](#). Federal health regulators have fast-tracked approvals for coronavirus research, allowing scientists across the nation to skip through months of red tape on potential treatments and vaccines for the deadly virus.
- **Daiichi Sankyo:** [Daiichi Sankyo Company announced](#) that, through the Japan Center for International Exchange, it will make a donation of \$1 million to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund\*2 in support of relief efforts for countermeasures against COVID-19.

### GOVERNMENTS – R&D and CLINICAL TRIALS

- **Politico:** [Von der Leyen announces May 4 coronavirus vaccine pledging conference](#). The Commission will host a virtual pledging conference on May 4 to raise money to fill "immediate funding gaps" in vaccine research, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.
- **The Japan Times:** [Abe and other Asian leaders affirm urgent need to develop coronavirus treatment](#). In a virtual ASEAN Meeting, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe explained clinical research being conducted on Avigan, an antiviral drug developed by a domestic firm that has been effective in treating COVID-19 patients. Japan plans to provide the drug, also known as Favipiravir, to at least 20 countries for free in order to expand studies on its efficacy.
- **Reuters:** [China approves coronavirus vaccine trials](#). China has approved early-stage human tests of two experimental vaccines to combat COVID-19. The vaccines are being developed by a Beijing-based unit of Nasdaq-listed Sinovac Biotech and by the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, an affiliate of state-owned China National Pharmaceutical Group.

## DIAGNOSTICS

- **Bloomberg:** [U.S. to Boost Payment for Abbott's Covid-19 Test to Increase Use](#). The U.S. government will nearly double the amount it pays hospitals and medical centers to run Abbott Laboratories' large-scale coronavirus tests, an incentive to get the facilities to hire more technicians and expand testing that has fallen significantly short of the machines' potential.

## SOCIAL IMPACT

- **Bloomberg:** [Harvard Researchers Say Some Social Distancing May Be Needed Into 2022](#). People around the world might need to practice some level of social distancing intermittently through 2022 to stop Covid-19 from surging anew and overwhelming hospital systems, a group of Harvard disease researchers said Tuesday.

## WHO – Daily COVID-19 update, 15 April

### Media briefing by Dr Tedros:

- The United States of America has been a longstanding and generous friend to WHO and we hope it will continue to be so. We regret the decision of the president of the United States to order a halt in the funding to WHO. With support from the people and government of the United States, WHO works to improve the health of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.
- WHO is reviewing the impact on our work of any withdrawal of U.S. funding and will work with our partners to fill any financial gaps we face and to ensure our work continues uninterrupted.
- In addition to the Solidarity Trial, Dr Tedros announces that the WHO has convened groups of clinicians to look at the impact of corticosteroids and other anti-inflammatory drugs on treatment outcomes.

### **NEW WHO resources**

[COVID-19 Strategy update 14 April 2020](#). The overarching goal is for all countries to control the pandemic by slowing down the transmission and reducing mortality associated with COVID 19. **The global strategic objectives are as follows:**

- Mobilize all sectors and communities to ensure that every sector of government and society takes ownership of and participates in the response and in preventing cases through hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and individual level physical distancing.
- Control sporadic cases and clusters and prevent community transmission by rapidly finding and isolating all cases, providing them with appropriate care, and tracing, quarantining, and supporting all contacts.
- Suppress community transmission through context appropriate infection prevention and control measures, population level physical distancing measures, and appropriate and proportionate restrictions on non-essential domestic and international travel.
- Reduce mortality by providing appropriate clinical care for those affected by COVID 19, ensuring the continuity of essential health and social services, and protecting frontline workers and vulnerable populations.
- Develop safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics that can be delivered at scale and that are accessible based on need.

[Updated Country Preparedness and Response Status for COVID-19](#). The purpose of this document is to provide a practical guide for the UNCTs and partners to develop a Country Preparedness Response Plan (CPRP) to immediately support national governments to prepare for and respond to COVID-19. This guide outlines the priority steps and actions to be included in the CPRP across the major areas of the public health preparedness and response:

- Country-level coordination, planning, and monitoring;
- Risk communication and community engagement;
- Surveillance, rapid-response teams, and case investigation;
- Points of entry;
- National laboratories;
- Infection prevention and control;
- Case management;
- Operations support and logistics.