Global Health Security is Everyone’s Business:

Building Productive Partnerships to Prepare for Future Health Emergencies

September 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the global need for collaborative solutions in a new era of emerging public health threats. Literally, health security has become everyone’s business. As members of the Private Sector Roundtable on Global Health Security (PSRT), we offer this White Paper as a pragmatic exploration of how to enlist the diverse capabilities of business to strengthen health systems against the vulnerabilities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic — and beyond.

The time is right for the private sector to step forward. As the world begins to recover, many of the governments, international organizations and NGOs active in fighting COVID-19 have expressed a commitment to work with the private sector as part of a more integrated, ‘whole of society’ response to disease spread. This move represents a welcome acknowledgment of what businesses have been doing already, together with the local communities they serve as employers and providers of useful technologies and essential goods and services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has helped accelerate private sector investments in core service capabilities, ranging from supply chain logistics to digital transformation. Multinational companies are also leveraging their strengths in capacity building and developing human capital to help communities manage pressures on overstretched health systems at the ground level, where it counts.

This is not a transient exercise in corporate philanthropy. Instead, the measures represent strategic, structural improvements that the private sector wants to see sustained after the COVID-19 pandemic to support more stable environments for the long term. What is required in turn is more cooperation between governments and the private sector to focus attention on global health security efforts that anticipate and address infectious disease outbreaks before they can spread out of control.

This White Paper offers examples of COVID-19 related projects supported by members of the PSRT that show the deep reach of skills companies are making available in diverse settings. The private sector brings a range of expertise to health emergencies and cooperation is critical — especially because future health crises are likely to produce a combination of negative effects and potentially at a much greater scale than has occurred to date.
As the world emerges from the pandemic and begins to build a better framework for preventing, detecting and responding to emerging threats to public health, the time is right to invite all of business to share their best practices in pursuit of a stronger multisectoral regime on global health security. The many public statements from multilateral agencies, governments and NGOs supporting more outreach to the private sector are a good start. Now it is time to agree on mechanisms to tie collaborations to measurable actions and outcomes that make a difference on the ground and in people’s lives.

Based on our learnings from COVID-19 and other recent pandemic threats, the PSRT offers the following recommendations for how to better integrate the private sector for greater – and more sustained – impact:

1. **LEADERSHIP**
   Strengthen health security leadership, resources and initiatives to build more resilient health care systems. We support America’s leadership and increased investment in global health security, including strengthening the global health workforce, supporting research and development, and advancing capacity to prevent, detect and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

2. **GOVERNANCE**
   Continue to strengthen the multilateral architecture on global health security. The goal should be clear and transparent lines of responsibility rather than establishing additional decision points and layers of bureaucracy that could delay action, divert resources and complicate the business community’s desire to partner on health security.

3. **PARTNERSHIP**
   Multilateral institutions and national governments should certify support for participation of the private sector in health security initiatives by endorsing clear and consistent rules of engagement – a necessary prerequisite for achieving greater impact in the global fight against pandemics. Establishing a systematic way to include the private sector in preparedness planning and prevention should be a priority. Likewise, soliciting insights and perspectives from industry about the implications of select government policies under consideration could help identify opportunities for the business community to support these policies and identify potential unintended consequences.

4. **INVESTMENT**
   Provide strong, sustained and long-term investments in global health security, particularly in the key areas of preparedness and prevention. All stakeholders should commit to improvements in national and global systems to ensure health security, including sustained funding and the capability to allocate necessary surge funding at the supranational level during peak periods of crisis.

5. **INFORMATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**
   Engage with different sectors and stakeholders to provide comprehensive support for the information systems required to implement needs-appropriate strategies for health emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

6. **SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE**
   Boost supply chain resilience and promote the supply chain as a critical component of global health security, which is itself highly sensitive to any disruptions that suppress broader business and economic performance and social well-being.

7. **HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS**
   Communicate evidence-based and creative, culturally appropriate messaging from the outset of a health emergency to promote health and safety measures and avoid dangerous misinformation. Engage experts in communications at the outset of a health emergency and continue to leverage their capabilities to generate demand for new vaccines and treatments to combat the next pandemic.

We hope that this White Paper will create an inclusive dialogue that resonates with a singular message: when new pandemics emerge, no one is safe until everyone is safe. Pandemic preparedness requires careful planning and coordination now to avert future crises before they arise. Working together on these recommendations, governments, the private sector and civil society can prepare to respond effectively and sustainably to the next health threat in a way that will protect population health, mitigate risks, strengthen health equity, and promote economic security for the long term.

Private sector capabilities have untapped potential to help build the resilient health systems that all governments agree are necessary if the world is going to be better prepared for the next health crisis.
INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 600 million people have had documented infections and more than 6.4 million are known to have died worldwide as of September 1, 2022. More than 12 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered globally, but the distribution of these preventive measures has not been equitable: as of September 2022, only 20 percent of individuals in low-income countries are vaccinated, compared to 83 percent of those in high-income countries. And the coronavirus pandemic has wreaked havoc on societies and economies worldwide, with widespread disruption to education, business and social routines. Regular, preventive and often urgent health care delivery was upended while efforts turned towards COVID-19 despite persistent need. 90% of countries reported one or more disruptions to essential health services in 2021. The fact that the world is now in year three of this public health emergency underscores the need for greater collaboration within the global health community to address the current emergency and future crises.

By working together with the private sector and taking advantage of the capabilities and resources of companies large and small, governments and civil society can forge a 'whole of society' approach to pandemic preparedness and response.

A New Conversation with Business

It is important to see this pandemic in context. A prominent feature of the response to COVID-19 has been the marriage between innovative private sector technology and government financing that brought forward, in record time, new vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to control viral spread. To date, 67 percent of the world’s population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, alongside these other life-saving technologies. Less well known, however, is the way the pandemic has helped accelerate private sector investments in core service capabilities, ranging from supply chain logistics to digital transformation. Multinational companies are also utilizing their workforce development capabilities to help communities manage pressures on overstretched health systems at the ground level, where it counts.

This is not a transient exercise in corporate philanthropy. Instead, the measures represent strategic, structural improvements that the private sector wants to see sustained after the COVID-19 pandemic to support more stable environments, in-country, for the long term. What is required in turn is more cooperation between governments and the private sector to focus attention on global health security efforts that anticipate and address infectious disease outbreaks before they can spread out of control. One lesson to be learned from SARS, Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic is, surely, that coordinated investments by governments and the private sector in pandemic preparedness will pay off by helping societies deal more effectively with the challenges posed by pathogens with pandemic potential.
That points us to the vital questions of “how.”

What institutional changes are needed to ensure that the 'whole of society' approach to global health security incorporates the diverse capabilities of companies across industries, from manufacturing to services? How do we move from the reactive stance of calling on the private sector only when a crisis hits to a more proactive relationship based on joint early interventions to mitigate the long-lasting impacts of health emergencies on vulnerable communities?

The United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals lay a foundation for greater private sector engagement in ensuring health security. SDG 9 focuses on building resilient infrastructure, SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and SDG 17 calls for revitalizing global partnership for sustainable development – including multi-stakeholder partnerships.

As members of the Private Sector Roundtable on Global Health Security (PSRT), representing key businesses at the frontline of the COVID-19 response, we believe a change in mindset about working with the private sector is underway. Since the start of the pandemic, key public institutions responsible for expanding health security have pledged to join with business in going beyond consultation to action.

The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), representing the WHO and the World Bank (WB); the G-7 group of industrialized nations; the G-20 coalition of the world’s biggest economies, rich and poor; the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the world’s largest national funder of official development assistance; and the top-ranking global health philanthropy, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, have in the last year made specific commitments to deepen their ties with private enterprise.

Time to Evolve the Public-Private Partnership Model

In light of these expressions of support, and as the official representative of the private sector in deliberations on the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), backed by 70 UN member states, the PSRT offers this policy statement on ways to mobilize the diversity of non-governmental resources needed to prepare for future threats to global health. This White Paper combines description and prescription to:

- Highlight the scope and value of private sector contributions to the expanding global armamentarium on health emergency preparedness and response; and

- Identify opportunities to strengthen rules of engagement among the different stakeholders in global health, first and foremost with business, through emphasis on public-private partnerships that contribute to building more resilient national health systems and infrastructure. These are the foundations of an effective health security strategy to meet the increasing global burden of disease.

Overall, our desire is to advance the public-private partnership model and create fresh momentum behind it. We are seeking an open and transparent framework to guide capacity building initiatives involving business and public institutions in tandem with local communities and others in civil society.

To this end, we invite governments and the international community to work with businesses across industries to raise the profile of health security as a global development objective. Because business success ultimately relies on human capital, we share with our public sector colleagues a commitment to health as a driver of economic potential, productivity and personal well-being. These carry advantages that are not only in the public interest but are also fundamental to businesses’ license to operate.
We invite governments and the international community to work with businesses across industries to raise the profile of health security as a global development objective.

Cooperation is critical because future health crises are likely to present a combination of adverse effects and at a much greater scale than has occurred to date, requiring a multi-faceted effort to arrive at solutions. Private sector capabilities have untapped potential to help build the resilient health systems that all governments agree are necessary if the world is going to be better prepared for the next health crisis. The sector’s sheer weight in the global economy – private capital now accounts for some 90% of financial flows to low- and middle-income countries – suggests that business acumen is an unrecognized opportunity.

The same argument was put forward in a 2021 brief on collaborative engagement issued by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which affirmed that the creativity, versatility, and diversification introduced through private initiative must be regarded as an asset, especially when a public health crisis renders standard practice inoperable. The private sector’s impetus to innovate, through its extended capabilities in technology, logistics and human capital, is the ‘critical skill set’ in building a durable health security foundation for the future.

The Business Case for Health Security

For business, it is a critical imperative to work productively with others to improve the way society responds to public health emergencies. Supply chain interruptions, workforce displacement and other market vulnerabilities resulting from periodic outbreaks of infectious diseases – the WHO has recorded six global health emergencies since 2007 – only reinforce the importance of preserving stability in the marketplace.

PSRT members, like others in the global business community, felt the impact of contagion firsthand in protecting their local workforce and operations from the Ebola pandemic that tore through parts of the Africa sub-continent in 2014-2016, killing more than 11,000 people. As this shared experience filtered through corporate and industry circles, Ebola was tagged as a ‘teachable moment.’ While the rapid development of vaccines to prevent Ebola infection by companies like Merck and Johnson & Johnson was important, it was understood that the residual impact of cash and donations on vulnerable populations was minimal. Such measures needed to be reinforced with directed investments in human capital, upgrades in infrastructure, and process technologies that yield permanent improvements in sustainable health systems – from logistics, supply chain and manufacturing to project management, data science, disease risk and surveillance and communications.

Indeed, it became clear that the most sustainable work companies had done against Ebola involved transferring useful knowledge and how-to in the field, which in turn presented the possibility of a more stable environment in which to do business – for the long term. It became clear that planning for health security without investing in preparedness is dead weight against a virus on the move.
Mobilizing public-private partnerships to invest in health system upgrades that build capacity and stimulate more local know-how can restore public trust in institutions whose credibility suffered as the pandemic shredded the ideal of basic health for all.

The PSRT is an expression of the business community’s commitment to a multi-sector approach to health security. Its member companies are cross-sectoral and each has addressed the dislocations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways, beyond money or in-kind donations. In 2018, the PSRT became a permanent member of the GHSA Steering Group, giving it an official role in presenting the business perspective on global health security throughout the UN system, including the G-7 and G-20 group of nations. Due to its unique place in the GHSA hierarchy, the PSRT has access to a wide circle of decision-makers on global health security issues.

The PSRT membership represents a variety of business sectors, including energy, logistics, medical supplies, bioengineering, technology, communications and biopharmaceuticals. All share a conviction that better health is everyone’s business — truly a global public good — and is best guaranteed when all stakeholders work in common to keep populations safe from disease.

More important, like others in the business community, PSRT members are concerned about the pace of progress on health security. This perspective is widely shared in the global health community as well, evidenced by the WHO Director-General Tedros’s assessment that “while the COVID-19 pandemic is in many respects unprecedented, in no respect was it unforeseen.”

Although all can agree on the need to act, translating will into commitment is still a work in progress.

In the past six years, PSRT members have met with more than 40 health ministers to discuss health security, underscoring the message that business has a pragmatic interest in a more resilient framework to keep the world safe against the inevitable dislocations that accompany a global health emergency. We see health security as a development objective as much as a policy objective, one that can best be advanced by a broader dialogue with business that includes national governments; global, regional and national economic actors; multilateral organizations; community organizations and public finance officials as well as leaders in global health.

An example of this cross-sector collaboration is the Memorandum of Understanding that the PSRT negotiated and signed with Uganda’s Ministry of Health in June 2021. This strategic partnership seeks to advance health security goals through member company assistance to Uganda in three areas:

1. **Workforce development**, including management skills, data literacy and diagnostics in antimicrobial resistance
2. **Communications/advocacy programs** to raise awareness within government and among the public about health security as a national priority, and
3. **Strengthened monitoring and evaluation systems** to track progress towards Uganda’s health security.

The PSRT’s partnership with Uganda was designed to serve as a model for PPPs that could be applied elsewhere to strengthen global health security.

**Behind the Scenes: Private Sector Contributions to Health Security**

From the start, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a material impact on business operations worldwide — this is not a crisis that can be contained through conventional risk mitigation strategies. In 2020, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projected a worldwide economic loss of $28 trillion due to the pandemic through 2025. Two years later, the IMF anticipates continued constrained global growth due to worsening economic prospects in low-income countries and persistent supply disruptions in advanced economies.

Pain of such magnitude means that the private sector has a direct interest in contributing to building pandemic preparedness. Businesses’ own knowledge, skills and resources are necessary not only to ensure a faster recovery from COVID-19 but also to bolster global public health infrastructure, making it more durable and secure against similar existential health threats in the future.
Prominent business organizations like the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the US Chamber of Commerce agree that weaknesses in public sector disease prevention and emergency response capabilities revealed during the pandemic must be fixed. This starts with universal recognition that health security measures to control viral outbreaks are a common public good. All businesses rely on the rules, systems and resources that governments put in place to protect health as an essential part of doing business, within and across borders, for the long term. When health security measures don’t work as intended, all of society – business included – suffers the consequences.

In addition to the PSRT, companies are doing this work in a variety of settings, from the US Chamber of Commerce/Business Roundtable Global Task Force on Pandemic Response and the World Economic Forum’s COVID Action Platform, to partnering with major multilateral financial institutions like the World Bank’s International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the Manila-based Asia Development Bank (ADB). There are also sector-specific initiatives like the International COVID-19 Data Alliance (ICODA), an open access research platform supported by major IT software companies that disseminates findings on the coronavirus relevant to low- and middle-income countries.

And while large companies with global reach have been dominant players in industry’s COVID-19 response, there is growing involvement by local businesses working at the grassroots level, particularly in hard-hit regions like Africa, where communities are struggling with infrastructure to cope with limited public awareness of the virus. In Nigeria, a number of small private firms supported the government’s online information efforts on COVID-19 with a 'triage tool' to allow patients to self-assess risks of infection and obtain accurate, officially sanctioned advice on what to do next.

**From “How Much” to “How To:” Ways Business is Stretching the Learning Curve on COVID-19**

A notable aspect of the pandemic has been a resurgence of public–private partnerships that allow businesses to apply their core in-house capabilities – in people, technologies and management skills – to help countries enhance health security and expand vital health infrastructure in anticipation of future pandemic threats. It’s a big step beyond money and donations, underscoring what globally integrated businesses do every day: cultivate human capital and the knowledge to meet business objectives and achieve measurable results.

Areas where companies have provided specialized input include strengthening cold storage capacity and other elements of supply chain management to handle vaccines; health workforce training and development; health communications to improve uptake of vaccines and use of personal protective measures; and data science technologies and IT, with applications from disease surveillance to emergency response operations.

Much of this is being done through multi-sectoral collaborations that pool expertise. An example is the involvement of three PSRT members – Henry Schein, Johnson & Johnson and the UPS Foundation – in the Pandemic Supply Chain Network (PSCN) hosted by the World Economic Forum. The Network acts as a decision support tool to help multilateral procurement agencies, governments and business identify and resolve demand shortfalls or logistics barriers that hinder supply chain functionality – critical information during the COVID-19 response.

“As global companies with high visibility in markets targeted for pandemic relief, we have the capabilities to ensure those markets work in facilitating the most impactful allocation of the materials needed to combat large-scale health emergencies – quickly and safely, on an end-to-end basis, at scale, anywhere in the world,” says Allison Neale, Managing Director of Henry Schein Cares Foundation and Vice President of Public Policy at Henry Schein, which co-chairs the PSCN.
Another noteworthy aspect of the private sector’s response to COVID-19 is the willingness to share its information and know-how widely, often through open access platforms. Qlik, a leader in data integration software and cloud analytics, joined the PSRT early on to advance its societal mission to solve big global challenges through data literacy.

Through contacts enabled by the PSRT, Qlik forged a partnership with the Asia Development Bank (ADB) to build a COVID-19 command center dashboard that provides real-time information synthesized from hundreds of sources to guide ADB staff in advising its 68 member countries on pandemic mitigation and response strategies. The dashboard has expanded into highly specific analytics on COVID-19 vaccines and diagnostics that have enabled member governments to track vaccine cold chain storage capacity across the entire region – a vital indicator in ensuring that available vaccine supplies are deployed efficiently. Because this information is available to all, the command center model can be replicated easily and customized to serve a variety of data users. “There is a consensus among policy makers that the response time to COVID-19 has been too slow,” says Qlik’s Vice President for Sustainability Julie Kae. “But when we work in partnership to spread integrated, reliable and relatable data drawn from sources open to all, we get things done more quickly.”

Another initiative spearheaded by the global communications giant IPG Health supported the ADB in advising several member governments on a COVID-19 orientation and messaging strategy appropriate for where they were at different phases of the pandemic. The initiative was intended to be catalytic and enabled the ADB to encourage countries to think differently while responding to a situation with no parallel in the region.

One important lesson is that solid metrics count – especially in a partnership of equals facing a singularly unpredictable virus. “Having clarity about goals and targets on what is the biggest problem African countries face in preparing for pandemics – the lack of human capital – is essential as it gives business something to aim at,” said John Nkengasong, Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, at a virtual event hosted by the PSRT. The policy discussion, Between Pandemics: Global Health Security, Universal Health Coverage, and the Role of the Private Sector, ended in a consensus that for public-private partnerships to work, better mechanisms are needed to yield results than can be measured on both sides.

Doubling Down: A Fresh Start for Business Partnering

The mechanics of business engagement on health security – specifically, how to do it – will receive a welcome boost as the US implements provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, signed by President Biden in December 2021. The law expands the US government’s domestic and global footprint on health security, with clear objectives and lines of responsibility accentuated by the higher visibility that comes with increased budgetary and staffing resources.

New institutional mechanisms will extend the policy reach of health security and bring more actors – most prominently, the private sector – into the decision-making loop. Notably, the law recognizes the key coordinating role of the GHSA in global health security and puts real money – in the form of a new Global Fund for Health Security and Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness – to facilitate and provide grants to public-private partnerships in key areas where businesses have ‘relevant expertise.’

The proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023 includes pandemic preparedness efforts and support for investments in medical countermeasures, disease detection and bio-surveillance, advanced computing, lab biosafety and biosecurity, and threat reduction activities. These investments are opportunities for the kind of public-private partnerships sought by the PSRT and other industry groups – and the business community stands ready to collaborate.
Recommendations for Productive Partnering on Global Health Security

As the world emerges from the pandemic and begins to build a better framework for preventing, detecting and responding to emerging threats to public health, the time is right to invite all of business to share their best practices in pursuit of a stronger multisectoral regime on global health security. The many public statements from multilateral agencies, governments and NGOs supporting more outreach to the private sector are a good start. Now it’s time to agree on how to tie collaborations to measurable actions and outcomes that make a difference on the ground and in people’s lives.

Based on our learnings from COVID-19 and other recent pandemic threats, the PSRT offers the following recommendations for how to accomplish this goal:

1. LEADERSHIP
Strengthen health security leadership, resources and initiatives to build more resilient health care systems. We support America’s leadership and increased investment in global health security, including strengthening the global health workforce, supporting research and development, and advancing capacity to prevent, detect and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks.

2. GOVERNANCE
Continue to strengthen the multilateral architecture on global health security. The goal should be clear and transparent lines of responsibility rather than establishing additional decision points and layers of bureaucracy that could delay action, divert resources and complicate the business community’s desire to partner on health security.

3. PARTNERSHIP
Multilateral institutions and national governments should certify support for participation of the private sector in health security initiatives by endorsing clear and consistent rules of engagement – a necessary prerequisite for achieving greater impact in the global fight against pandemics. Encourage expanded use of the public-private partnership model to ensure business knowledge and resources become part of the fabric of health emergency preparedness and response. Establishing a systematic way to include the private sector in preparedness planning and prevention should be a priority. Likewise, soliciting insights and perspectives from industry about the implications of select government policies under consideration could help identify opportunities for the business community to support these policies and identify potential unintended consequences.

4. INVESTMENT
Provide strong, sustained and long-term investments in global health security, particularly in the key areas of preparedness and prevention. All stakeholders should commit to improvements in national and global systems to ensure health security, including sustained funding and the capability to allocate necessary surge funding at the supranational level during peak periods of crisis. The best way to accomplish this is to highlight the importance of comprehensive, ongoing investments in health security and emergency preparedness that rely on multiple sources from different sectors, not just government, and taking a broad view of health needs, beyond specific disease areas.
Pandemic preparedness requires careful planning and coordination now to avert future crises before they arise.

5. INFORMATION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
Engage with different sectors and stakeholders to provide comprehensive support for the information systems required to implement needs-appropriate strategies for health emergency prevention, preparedness and response. One underutilized area where business has significant expertise is in the digital transformation of data analytics, collection and evaluation. Transparent and evidence-based decision-making should be a priority in preparation for future health emergencies because information guides the development of effective interventions that save lives.

6. SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE
Boost supply chain resilience and promote the supply chain as a critical component of global health security, which is itself highly sensitive to any disruptions that suppress broader business and economic performance and social well-being. Prioritize supply chain collaborations, including long-term partnerships that enable data sharing, market visibility and logistics/operational coordination for the distribution of critical health care supplies during future health emergencies.

7. HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS
Communicate evidence-based and creative, culturally appropriate messaging—essential to promote health and safety measures and avoid dangerous misinformation. Engage experts in communications at the outset of a health emergency and continue to leverage their capabilities to generate demand for new vaccines and treatments to combat the next pandemic.

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