



UN agencies launch Tech Access Partnership in joint effort to scale up local production of life-saving health technologies for COVID-19

Press Release

12 May 2020, New York - The United Nations Technology Bank, together with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Health Organization (WHO), launched the Tech Access Partnership (TAP) today as part of a coordinated approach to strengthen developing countries' responses to COVID-19 and increase access to lifesaving health technologies.

As demand for personal protective equipment, medical devices and diagnostics increases exponentially amid the global pandemic, countries with limited resources are often unable to purchase or produce the tools they need to mount effective responses to COVID-19. Lack of access to technical expertise, training and regulatory frameworks also limit local production of essential equipment in these regions, particularly for more complex products like ventilators.

TAP aims to address critical shortages of essential health technologies and equipment by connecting manufacturers with critical expertise and emerging manufacturers in developing countries to share the information, technical expertise and resources necessary to scale up production of these tools. The Partnership will also support countries to develop affordable technologies and equipment that meet quality and safety standards.

"Now, more than ever, the global community needs to unite to save lives and secure sustainable futures. Inequalities are exacerbating the technology and digital divide when it comes to opportunities for youth, creating a divide that threatens to leave them behind," says Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the UN. "Increasing access to necessary technologies through partnerships, is a crucial component of the United Nations' COVID-19 health, humanitarian and socio-economic response."

TAP will be led by the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries, established in 2016 to assist governments with the development and adaptation of new technologies. The initiative, which is open to all developing countries, will also be supported by its core partners, UNDP, UNCTAD and WHO.

"Without access to lifesaving technologies, many developing countries are unprepared for the potentially devastating impact of COVID-19," says Joshua Setipa, Managing Director, UN Technology Bank. "By

enabling developing countries to produce these technologies themselves, we can help set them on the path to recovery.”

TAP’s key functions will include:

- **Product Information** – a digital warehouse of manufacturing and design specifications, technical knowledge and information required to increase capacity.
- **Technical Guidance** – a lifeline of technical support to help manufacturers troubleshoot issues they may encounter as they seek to ramp up production, including information on market dynamics and regulatory hurdles.
- **Partnerships** – a platform to match companies based on expertise, needs and capacity.

The initiative is guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN’s call for shared responsibility and solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis.

“TAP’s role in advancing more equitable access to critical health technologies is fundamental to help developing countries in responding to the immediate and devastating effects of COVID-19,” says Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator. “Moreover, the partnership’s efforts to increase access to critical knowledge, technical tools and guidance will boost the resilience of countries and societies to future shocks – while helping to drive their socio-economic recovery at the same time.”

“COVID-19 has shown us that a disease outbreak anywhere is a threat everywhere. We must stand together to support all countries and ensure equitable access to lifesaving technologies,” says Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO. “Scaling up access to medicines and health technologies in these countries is essential to slow new infections and avoid unnecessary deaths.”

TAP will also collaborate with other relevant initiatives to ensure COVID-19 response efforts are coordinated and complementary. The partnership is centered in the UN Development System’s overall approach to counter the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which includes scaling up global capacity for testing and treatment, providing social protections for the most vulnerable and making countries resilient to future pandemics.

“The Technology Access Partnership can be an important part of the effort to help developing countries recover from this crisis,” says Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD. “By expanding the skills and capacity of local manufacturers, the initiative can boost innovation and contribute to inclusive economic growth.”

As an initial pilot, TAP will begin working with manufacturers in several developing countries around the world.

“There’s an urgent need to start filling gaps in technology and equipment to meet the health needs of our population,” says Cham Prasidh, Senior Minister and Minister of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation of Cambodia. “Our country faces similar challenges as other developing countries: lack of

special-purpose spare parts, specific technical know-how, experience with different technologies, and funding for research and development. Greater access to these tools offered under TAP will save lives, boost our country's responses to COVID-19 and help us prepare for future crises.”

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About the UN Technology Bank

The UN Technology Bank is a global organisation dedicated to enhancing the contribution of science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in the world's 47 least developed countries. Least developed countries are low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. They are highly vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks and have low levels of human assets.

The UN Technology Bank supports national and regional technological efforts in least developed countries, reinforcing partnerships across sectors and helping nations identify and use appropriate technologies to transform their economies and improve livelihoods.

About UN Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in some 170 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

About UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD supports developing countries to access the benefits of a globalized economy more fairly and effectively, helping equip them to deal with the potential drawbacks of greater economic integration. To do this, UNCTAD provides analysis, facilitates consensus-building, and offers technical assistance. This helps countries to use trade, investment, finance, and technology as vehicles for inclusive and sustainable development.

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO is the United Nations' specialized agency for health. It is an intergovernmental organization and works in collaboration with its Member States usually through the Ministries of Health. The World Health Organization is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. Learn more at www.who.int.

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