

Sofia, 3 June 2016

Dear Minister Moskov,

Dear Ministers of Health,

Dear Participants in today's discussion,

On behalf of the Patient Access Partnership (PACT), I would like to express sincere gratitude to Minister Moskov for initiating this important dialogue and for also providing the opportunity to me to raise some major concerns in the best interests of the patients. The Patient Access Partnership welcomes today's meeting as an encouraging step to address important issues related to access to healthcare at the regional level.

There has been significant progress in establishing access to healthcare at the centre of the economic sustainability in the European Union. A decisive step on behalf of the European Union in this direction was the endorsement of the ambitious large-scale efforts of the United Nations which recently adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As emphasised in Goal 3 and elsewhere in the document, universal coverage is a human right, according to which "[e]very human being is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health conducive to living a life in dignity"¹. Access, it suggests, is the key to sustainable health systems as it has the potential to reduce inequalities². However, as the Preliminary opinion on Access to health services in the European Union of the Expert Panel on Effective Ways of Investing in Health³ suggests, more efforts are needed to address the multi-dimensional barriers to access – at the individual, provider and health system level.

Recalling the overwhelming evidence which suggests that one of the main components of access to healthcare of patients, especially those with chronic diseases, is access to affordable innovative medicines which promise cure or easing the burden of the disease, we herein confirm that we will endorse, encourage and support efforts which aim to **improve the collaboration between Member States** and **ensure early dialogue with the wider healthcare community** – stakeholders and patients.

More specifically, we would like to emphasize the value of:

1. Exploring innovative mechanisms for improving access to healthcare, in particular to medicines for patients, including innovative strategies for pricing and reimbursement also

¹ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), *General Comment No. 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Art. 12 of the Covenant)*, 11 August 2000, E/C.12/2000/4, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4538838d0.html> [accessed 14 March 2016]

² A/RES/70/1. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

³ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/expert_panel/consultations/access_healthcare_en.htm

- linked to the added (therapeutic) value of the medicines;
2. Enhancing the multi-country (regional) cooperation to improve the current procedures for Health Technology Assessment in order to ensure timely access to innovation and accurate assessment of the added value of medicines based on value-oriented decisions as opposed to clinical-led judgements;
 3. Improving the transparency in the discussions and criteria for decision-making on pricing and reimbursement to ensure accessible and understandable information;
 4. Ensuring early dialogue with stakeholders and the industry to maximize the benefit of the outcomes;
 5. Implementing integrated and holistic policies to improving access, i.e. interventions that ensure that healthcare services are not simply available but also affordable, accessible, adequate and appropriate.

The Patient Access Partnership is ready to be a valuable partner in addressing these key hurdles in access to healthcare. Our multi-stakeholder partnership of patients, European policymakers, healthcare professionals, academia, and the pharmaceutical industry enable different stakeholders to join forces to develop sustainable solutions and approaches to improve access to quality healthcare across Europe.

An opportunity to discuss the outcomes of this meeting is the forthcoming PACT Regional Conference entitled **“Cooperation within the Region: A Way to Improve Access to Quality Healthcare in CEE”**, which will take place in Sofia (Bulgaria) on September 12th-13th under the auspices of Minster Moskov and the Bulgarian Ministry of Health. The conference will gather local representatives of all PACT partners from Central and Eastern European countries, including Serbia, Macedonia and Turkey offering a timely opportunity for the regional healthcare community to re-affirm its political commitment to address the gaps in access to healthcare. Whilst its regional focus, the conference will tackle issues and processes in the context of the wider EU agenda. Main topics on the agenda will include the implications and significance of the European Semester, the prospects for optimal use of the EU structural funds to improve health systems performance as well as the added value of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We herein extend a cordial invitation to all of you to take part in this important event!

We welcome your future efforts to improve the well-being of patients across the EU!

Sincerely,

Stanimir Hasurdjiev,

Secretary-General, Patient Access Partnership

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stanimir Hasurdjiev', is written over a horizontal line.