



## UN Monitor: COVID-19 Round-Up 28/04/2020

### *WHO ACT Accelerator*

On 24 April, the World Health Organization [announced a multi-stakeholder initiative](#) called the “Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, or the ACT Accelerator”. The ACT Accelerator [describes itself](#) as “a collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable global access to new COVID-19 essential health technologies”. It is “grounded in a vision of a planet protected from human suffering and the devastating social and economic consequences of COVID-19”.

The multi-stakeholder initiative was launched in Geneva by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus along with French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). It gathers together an identified “group of global health actors” including, along with BMGF, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), GAVI-the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund for Sustainable Development Data, UNITAID, the Wellcome Trust, WHO and the World Bank along with “private sector partners and other stakeholders”.

Thomas Cueni, Director-General of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, a private sector partner to the initiative, [highlighted this multi-stakeholder dimension](#), noting: “Today, scientists in the public and private sector hold the keys to our common goal: the swift end of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

On 4 May, the European Commission will begin a [pledging campaign](#) for financial support for the initiative. European Commission President von der Leyen stated:

“We need to bring the world, its leaders and people together against coronavirus. In just 10 days, we will launch a global pledging effort. A real marathon. Because beating coronavirus requires a global response and sustained actions on many fronts. We need to develop a vaccine, to produce it and deploy it to every corner of the world. And we need to make it available at affordable prices.”

Responses to the initiative question the modalities—how exactly will the initiative facilitate access and for whom? Third World Network (TWN) [notes](#), “many such initiatives in the past remain underfunded and are yet to reach the market. For example, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), launched in 2017 after the Ebola outbreak of 2014/2015, has not been able to deliver on its promise yet. The main obstacle for these initiatives is the lack of

interest of the big pharmaceutical companies to take forward the research in the absence of profit and proprietary rights”.

Further, TWN [adds](#), “on the same day as the ACT Accelerator’s launch, the Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Francis Gurry, released a statement claiming that ‘there does not appear to be any evidence that Intellectual Property (IP) is a barrier to access’”.

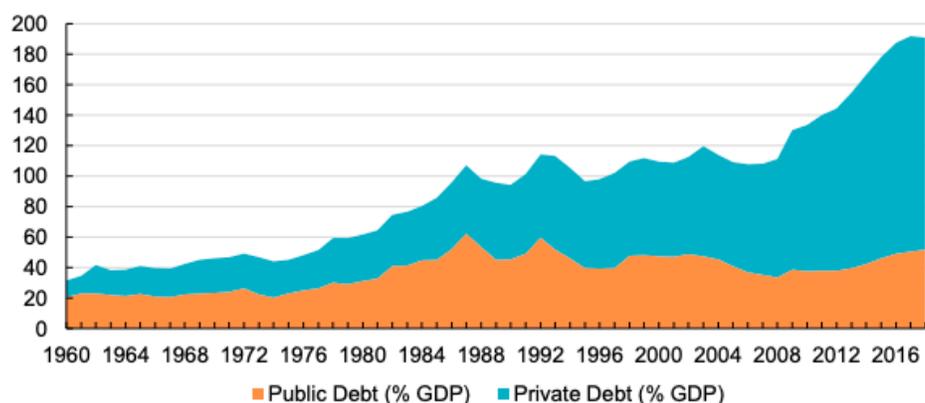
In helping to launch the initiative, UN Secretary-General António Guterres [noted](#): “A COVID-19 vaccine must be considered a global public good. Not a vaccine for one country or one region — but a vaccine that is affordable, safe, effective, easily-administered and universally available — for everyone, everywhere”.

At an informal briefing to the Human Rights Council on COVID-19, Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights has [emphasized that](#), “ we must build back better. No country was prepared for this shock, which in every State has been exacerbated by inequalities, particularly in access to health-care, social protections and public services”.

### ***UNCTAD: debt deal to prevent “From the Great Lockdown to the Great Meltdown”***

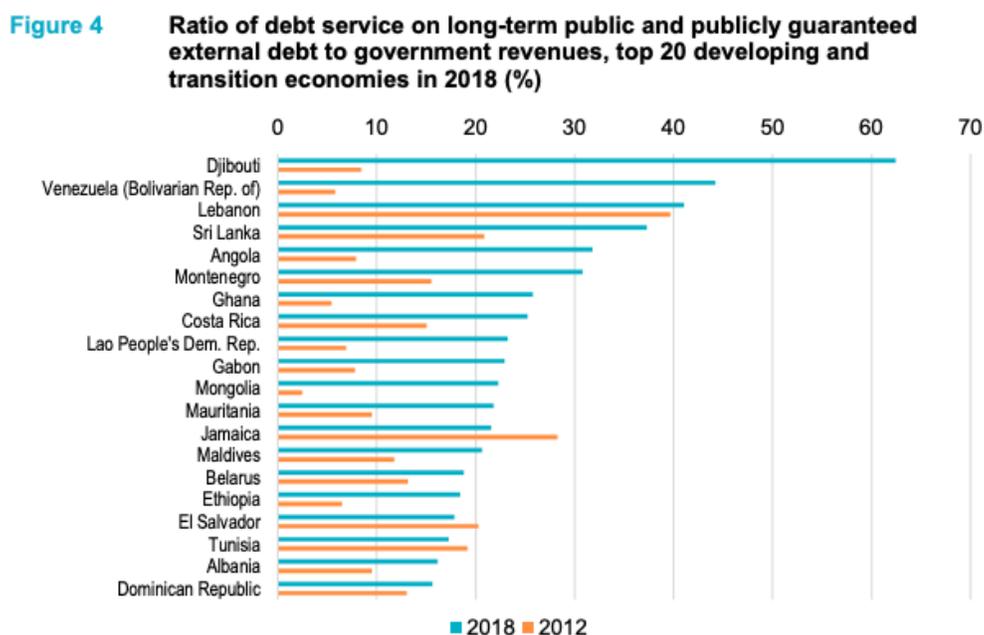
The UN trade and development body (UNCTAD) [reiterated its call](#) for a US\$1 trillion “debt deal” in a [report](#) titled “From the Great Lockdown to the Great Meltdown: Developing Country Debt in the Time of Covid-19”. As the report notes, by the end of 2018, “the total debt stocks of developing countries – external and domestic, private and public – stood at 191 per cent (or almost double) their combined GDP, the highest level on record”. Given this, “a developing country debt crisis [was] already under way prior to the Covid-19 shock”.

**Figure 1** Total Debt Stocks, all developing countries, 1960–2018  
(Percentage of GDP)



**Source:** UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on IMF Global Debt Database.

The report emphasizes that “Covid-19 hits developing economies at a time when they had already been struggling with unsustainable debt burdens for many years”. It showcases how many developing countries spend more than a quarter (25%) of domestic revenue on debt servicing.



Source: UNCTAD secretariat calculations based on *World Development Indicators (WDI)* and *IMF World Economic Outlook (WEO)*.

In this context, the report calls for longer and more comprehensive standstills than currently offered by the IMF and G20 proposals. It notes:

“The purpose of temporary standstills is to provide macroeconomic ‘breathing space’ for crisis-stricken developing countries to free up resources, normally dedicated to service in particular external sovereign debt, for two interrelated uses: First, to facilitate an effective response to the Covid-19 shock through increased health and social expenditure in the immediate future and, second, to allow for post-crisis economic recovery along sustainable growth, fiscal and trade balance trajectories.”

### **High-level Political Forum (HLPF) Review 2021-2023**

The intergovernmental negotiations for the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) review process and the High-level Political Forum will continue virtually. At the virtual 8 May meeting, Member States will discuss [a zero draft document](#), currently under silence procedure. Co-facilitators Kaha Imnadze of Georgia and Jean-Claude do Rego of Benin note that the zero draft “addresses only immediate provisions including themes for ECOSOC and HLPF for the cycle 2021-2023 and the sub-set of goals together with areas of acceleration to be reviewed during the second HLPF cycle”. These include:

“For 2021: “Human well-being and the SDGs: Recovering after the COVID-19 crisis”;  
For 2022: “Achieving sustainable and just economies and promoting sustainable development”;  
For 2023: “Universal access to energy in harmony with nature”

The zero draft also outlines an “in-depth review cycle” and “areas of acceleration” for the SDGs as follows:

“For 2021: Goals 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,16 and 17, and, as areas for acceleration: Human health, well-being and capabilities; and Sustainable food systems and healthy nutritional patterns

For 2022: Goals 5,6,8,9,10,11,12,16 and 17; and, as areas for acceleration: Sustainable and just economies; and promoting sustainable urban and peri-urban development

For 2023: Goals 5,6,7,12,13,14,15,16 and 17; and, as areas for acceleration: Achieving energy decarbonization; universal access to sustainable energy and securing the global environmental commons”.