

2021 First regular session of the UNICEF Executive Board
Statement by Human Rights Watch for Item 2

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Your Excellencies, Ambassador Plepytė, Permanent Representative of Lithuania, congratulations on your election as chair of the UNICEF Executive Board. My name is Akshaya Kumar and I'm speaking on behalf of Human Rights Watch, an ECOSOC accredited NGO where I serve as Crisis Advocacy Director. For the past year, that portfolio has included coordinating our work on the Covid-19 pandemic, including the complex questions around equitable vaccines access.

So far, Covid-19 vaccine roll-out has been marred by supply delays and growing questions around inequitable access. Bloomberg's [Covid-19 Vaccine Tracker](#) reported on February 8 that of the more than 131 million doses had been given in 73 countries, 78 percent (more than 102.48 million doses) went to people in the US, China, within the EU, and the UK. Executive Director Fore's remarks highlighted, the "disequalizing effects of a two tier exit from Covid-19." She warned of vaccine nationalism, over-contracting, and supply hoarding by rich countries, noting that the effects could be "felt for generations." (CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY) As civil society, we're heartened and inspired by the scale of UNICEF's mobilization in response to the pandemic, including its central role in working with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) in purchasing, transporting, and delivering Covid-19 vaccines. However, we are also concerned about the stark realities that the COVAX Facility is operating within, especially the preorder vaccine deals rich governments have already signed. Wealthy countries have purchased and reserved most available stock of the world's vaccines. Canada, for example, has booked enough doses for five times its population

The COVAX facility has yet to publish its contracts with companies and other entities. It has not endorsed the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool or taken steps to enable wide-ranging technology transfers or address IP barriers through open, non-exclusive licensing. In contrast, we note that for a decade now, UNICEF has published vaccine prices on its website, arguing that transparency will also help foster a competitive, diverse supplier base for global public goods.

Countries and supply chains are globally interdependent. Economies and people's lives and livelihoods won't recover if countries opt for a vaccine strategy that only looks at their own people. Generations of children will feel the impact. We hope during tomorrow's closed doors discussions with the WHO, you will be able to use your voice to argue in favor of transparency and treating intellectual property from scientific advances to respond to the pandemic as a global public good.
