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PRESS RELEASE

EQUITABLE AND APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO MEDICINES QUALITY MEDICINES, VACCINES AND SUPPLIES IN THE COMMONWEALTH: RECOMMENDATIONS COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTERS AND POLICY BRIEF RELEASED

On behalf of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association (CPA) and Commonwealth Health Professionals Alliance (CHPA), we would first like to thank all who attended and contributed to the Commonwealth Civil Society Forum 'Equitable and appropriate access to quality medicines and vaccines in the Commonwealth: innovative approaches and lessons learned from COVID-19 ' on Tuesday 18 May 2021. Led by the CPA, the forum provided a cross-Commonwealth multi-sector platform to discuss strategies to ensure equitable access to medicines, vaccines and medical supplies. With over 300 attendees, the wealth of diverse experiences and expertise from policy to practice across the Commonwealth provided many insightful discussions and debates. For those who missed the event, the recording can be found here: <http://www.chpa.co/>

Following the meeting, emerging themes and feedback on the draft recommendations have been captured in the final recommendations to health ministers, which were presented at the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting on 20 May 2021. Led by the CPA, together with the CHPA, this has been developed through expert consultation of stakeholders across the Commonwealth and insights from their survey analysis.

We are now extremely pleased to be sharing the attached policy brief. It details 5 key recommendations to ensure equitable access to quality medicines and vaccines, underscoring the need for a health systems approach, providing actionable points for governments to prioritise.

The pertinence of equitable medicines access has been further highlighted through the Covid-19 pandemic and we hope this policy brief can support building momentum for increasing global collaboration for positive change - both now, in times of heightened need, and sustained into the future.

CPA Executive Director, Victoria Rutter commented on the release of the policy brief:

“The Commonwealth Civil Society Policy Forum was held online again for a second year and a strong line up set the scene for stimulating discussions on equitable access to medicines and vaccines. Taking these deliberations into account, the results from our survey and the input of several experts in the access to medicines field we drew together 5 key recommendations which we hope provide tangible asks. I presented these on behalf of the CHPA at the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting that took place a few days after the Forum. The overarching message from the Forum was the need to work with all stakeholders - government, civil society and the private sector to address COVID19 vaccine equity as an urgent issue. This collaborative approach would also be beneficial in addressing the wider access to medicines challenges. We look forward to creating more dialogue around this as part of our recommendations which are framed by the narrative of the policy brief.”

Victoria Rutter