



## STATEMENT

### MAJOR MILESTONE FOR ACCESS TO MEDICAL OXYGEN

#### WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION EXECUTIVE BOARD ADOPTS LANDMARK OXYGEN RESOLUTION

3 February 2023

The Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO) will recommend that the 76th World Health Assembly adopt its first **Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution** when it meets in May 2023 - a major milestone in the long journey to ensure that no more patients die from lack of access to this essential medicine.

The Every Breath Counts Coalition applauds the Government of Uganda for submitting the draft resolution and the governments of Australia, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, the European Union and its 27 Member States, Kenya, and Türkiye for co-sponsoring.

Eleven other governments announced their support for the resolution during the Executive Board meeting on 1 February 2023, including Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Mozambique, Namibia, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United States of America. We salute them.

The resolution, which was discussed during Session 5 on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), urges Member States to undertake 20 high-impact actions including:

- ensuring medical oxygen and associated medical devices are on national lists of essential medicines and medical devices for adults and children
- developing national medical oxygen plans
- assessing and monitoring oxygen access gaps - products and people
- updating national pharmacopoeia to align with the latest WHO revision on oxygen
- raise public awareness about the life-saving role of medical oxygen

The resolution also requests that the WHO Director-General undertakes 11 specific actions, including:

- developing guidelines, technical specifications, forecasting tools, training materials and other resources
- promoting convergence and harmonization of regulations governing the provision of medical oxygen
- supporting Member States' efforts to provide financing for affordable medical oxygen and for the trained workforce required
- including medical oxygen supply in WHO-related pandemic, preparedness and response efforts
- establishing a medical oxygen research agenda

- sharing best practices in closing gaps to medical oxygen
- enabling partnerships between non-State actors and Member States in the design and delivery of medical oxygen solutions
- reporting on progress in the implementation of this resolution to the Health Assembly in 2026, 2028 and 2030

The resolution builds on more than two years of intense collaboration between Member States and the **ACT-Accelerator Oxygen Emergency Taskforce**<sup>1</sup> to rapidly deploy oxygen supplies to help treat COVID-19 patients. The taskforce has so far mobilized **\$US1 billion** to support 100 low- and middle income countries (LMICs) - a multilateral medical oxygen effort unprecedented in scale and speed.

But despite these efforts, millions of COVID-19 patients across LMICS lost their lives because they could not get the oxygen they needed. Massive gaps also remain as countries do not have the oxygen or the workforce to meet the needs of all patients and to prepare for the next pandemic. Furthermore, LMICs lack the data to properly plan – for example, there are no official estimates of the large and diverse patient populations who need medical oxygen each year, their underlying conditions, or the amount of oxygen they need.

New efforts are underway to address these issues – including a Global Oxygen Alliance to continue the vital work of the ACT-A taskforce and a **Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security** to address data gaps.

If adopted and implemented, the WHO resolution would supercharge these efforts, strengthening health systems everywhere to provide medical oxygen to all who need it – from the preterm baby with a respiratory infection, to the injured teenager needing surgery, to the elderly patient with a chronic condition; and the massive populations affected when another pandemic hits.

The Every Breath Counts Coalition calls on all WHO Member States to support the Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution at the World Health Assembly in May 2023 and to ensure that oxygen access is also a focus at the **United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage** (UHC) in September 2023.

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View the WHO Executive Board deliberations on the Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution, Session 5, [here](#).

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<sup>1</sup>The ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce is chaired by Unitaaid and includes WHO, UNICEF, Africa CDC, The Global Fund, the World Bank, UNOPS, Save the Children, Every Breath Counts Coalition, Access to Medicine Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CHAI, and PATH.



## THANK YOU TO THE WHO MEMBER STATES WHO SUPPORTED THE ACCESS TO MEDICAL OXYGEN RESOLUTION

The following statements were made by WHO Member States during the 1 February discussions of the Executive Board and can be viewed [here](#), at the times below.

10:00-13:00 Session

1:46:54

**Rwanda**, on behalf of 47 Members States of the Africa region: The Africa region has co-sponsored...the resolution on increasing access to medical oxygen submitted by the Republic of Uganda and we look forward to the member states support for their adoption.

2:02:31

**Brazil**: We also thank Uganda for their leadership on the draft resolution on medical oxygen.

2:11:27

**Botswana**: Botswana supports the four draft resolutions under this agenda item.

2:13:31

**USA**: We want to thank Uganda for their leadership on the Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution and we are pleased to join as a co-sponsor.

2:18:26

**Ethiopia**: We are pleased to reiterate Ethiopia's support for the draft resolution submitted by Uganda.

2:56:32

**Peru**: I'd like to thank the proponents of the four draft resolutions under this agenda item.

14:30-17:45 Session

26:28

**Bangladesh**: Bangladesh would like to reaffirm support and co-sponsorship of the resolution from Uganda.

34:19

**Indonesia**: We would also like to register co-sponsorship for the increasing access to medical oxygen resolution by Uganda.

38:20

**Namibia**: Namibia supports the four resolutions under this agenda item and we also wish to co-sponsor the draft resolutions.

44:28

**South Africa**: South Africa supports and co-sponsors the four resolutions as they are presented here today.

44:34

**Egypt:** Egypt expresses its support and co-sponsorship to the resolution proposed by Uganda on increasing access to medical oxygen.

48:51

**Australia:** We are also pleased to co-sponsor the resolution on increasing access to medical oxygen and commend Uganda's leadership in taking this important initiative forward which will strengthen the systems and infrastructure needed to deliver medical oxygen and address gaps in access particularly those identified during the pandemic.

54:37

**Turkiye:** As a co-sponsor, we would also like to thank Uganda for their leadership in the draft resolution on access to medical oxygen.

1:04:18

**Kenya:** We affirm our support for adoption of all of the resolutions proposed under this agenda item.

1:04:32

**Uganda:** Less than half of all health facilities have uninterrupted access to medical oxygen. This unfortunate truth contributes to preventable deaths - a problem that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic when the demand for oxygen exceeded the capacities of many health systems. Lives were lost - and painfully - because of the inability of patients to access oxygen. We must and we should act immediately. Medical oxygen has a wide application in medical practice globally and improved access has enormous benefits to Member States that range from the treatment of hypoxemia for both communicable and non-communicable diseases, for pregnant women during and after delivery, for newborns in respiratory distress, for children with pneumonia, and many more. There is a dire need for this resolution and my delegation requests the Executive Board of the World Health Assembly support and adopt the Resolution by consensus and recommend it to the agenda of the World Health Assembly in May 2023.

1:24:30

**Mozambique:** Mozambique supports the resolution submitted by the Government of Uganda.