



STATEMENT

WORLD TURNS A CORNER ON ACCESS TO MEDICAL OXYGEN

LANDMARK ADOPTION OF OXYGEN RESOLUTION AT WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY AND LAUNCH OF NEW GLOBAL OXYGEN ALLIANCE TO SUPERCHARGE ITS IMPLEMENTATION

26 May 2023

Today, the 76th World Health Assembly unanimously adopted its first **Access to Medical Oxygen Resolution** with the power to prevent hundreds of thousands of deaths each year and ensure that no country ever again faces the oxygen shortages that tragically elevated the COVID-19 death toll in so many countries.

The Every Breath Counts Coalition applauds the **Government of Uganda** for their submission of the resolution and the original co-sponsors, including the governments of Australia, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, the European Union and its 27 Member States, Kenya, and Türkiye.

Eleven other governments announced their support for the resolution during the World Health Assembly Executive Board meeting in February 2023, including Botswana, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Mozambique, Namibia, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, and the United States of America.

Today, in adopting the resolution, all 194 WHO Member States have agreed to implement 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
- raising public awareness about the life-saving role of medical oxygen

The resolution also requests that the WHO Director-General undertake 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

To ensure that Member States are supported in the implementation of the resolution, a new Global Oxygen Alliance (GO₂AL) was also announced. Chaired by Unitaid and The Global Fund, with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) as Vice-chairs, the alliance includes the major global health organizations providing oxygen support to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).*

The GO₂AL builds on more than two years of intense collaboration between Member States and the **ACT-Accelerator Oxygen Emergency Taskforce**¹ to rapidly deploy oxygen supplies to help treat COVID-19 patients. The taskforce mobilized **\$US1 billion** to support 100 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 couldn't get oxygen, and massive gaps 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. LMICs also lack critical 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.

The WHO resolution will provide a strong framework for Member States and the GO₂AL to close these gaps and the **Lancet Global Health Commission on Medical Oxygen Security** adds a third arm to the global oxygen access effort.

The Every Breath Counts Coalition calls on the WHO and its Member States, the GO₂AL, and the Lancet Global Health Oxygen Commission to work closely together to accelerate the momentum generated over the past three years to strengthen health systems 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 like COPD; and for the massive populations affected when another respiratory pandemic hits.

With these three initiatives working together, the world has never been in a better position to ensure that medical oxygen – such an essential medicine for humanity – is available to all patients, everywhere.

*For more details see the **media statement** from Unitaid, The Global Fund, Africa CDC, and PAHO.

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¹The ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce was launched in February 2021 and was initially chaired by Unitaid and the Wellcome Trust with membership from WHO, UNICEF, Africa CDC, The Global Fund, World Bank, UNOPS, Save the Children, Every Breath Counts, Access to Medicine Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, CHAI, and PATH.