

MEDIA RELEASE • MEDIA RELEASE • MEDIA RELEASE**Novartis and Life Sciences Companies Commit Expertise and Assets to the Fight Against COVID-19 Pandemic alongside Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

- *Collaboration to address product development and scale up challenges posed by current pandemic*

Basel, March 26, 2020 — Today, Novartis and a consortium of life sciences companies announced an important collaboration to accelerate the development, manufacture and delivery of vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments for COVID-19 in response to the pandemic. The industry brings a range of assets, resources, and expertise needed to identify effective and scalable solutions to the pandemic that is affecting billions worldwide. Effects on health systems, economies, and livelihoods are significant, and effective response requires an unprecedented collaboration across government, academia, private sector, and philanthropy.

As co-chair of a consortium of life science companies headquartered across three continents, Vas Narasimhan, CEO of Novartis, said, “We feel a deep shared responsibility to see if there are specific areas where collaboration across the life sciences industry and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation can accelerate solutions to this pandemic. In addition to the individual contributions companies are already making, collective action is critical to ensure any promising studies into vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics are quickly scaled to people around the world who are affected by this pandemic.”

Trials of existing drugs, diagnostic tests, compounds, and investigational vaccines have begun around the world to identify interventions to slow or end the pandemic. Products that demonstrate efficacy will require clinical study, scale up of manufacturing, and distribution if proven effective. These are areas that the life sciences industry has extensive experience in managing for products that reach billions of people every day.

Mark Suzman, chief executive officer of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said, “We know that the private sector is where the technical skills from discovery to clinical trials to commercialization know-how sits. We look to harness that knowledge and experience, combine it where possible, to connect with national regulators and the World Health Organization to see if we can help flatten the curve of this pandemic and make sure the results reach everyone around the world, particularly those at highest risk and the poorest.”

Following a conference call with Gates Foundation leadership earlier this month, companies are working to identify concrete actions that will accelerate treatments, vaccines, and diagnostics to the field. As a first step, 15 companies have agreed to share their proprietary libraries of molecular compounds that already have some degree of safety and activity data – with the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator launched by the Gates Foundation, Wellcome,

and Mastercard two weeks ago to quickly screen them for potential against COVID-19. Successful hits would move rapidly into *in vivo* trials in as little as two months.

“This is an encouraging start in a critical area because if any of these compounds are shown to be effective against COVID-19 it dramatically accelerates the path to product approval and scale up,” said Suzman. “While each of the partners will also be pursuing other efforts in partnership with national governments and other partners, it is a great example of why we are optimistic that this unprecedented collaboration will provide a platform for a fundamentally different kind of partnership to help address this global health emergency.”

Companies participating in the collaboration include: BD, bioMérieux, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Eisai, Eli Lilly, Gilead, GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Merck (known as MSD outside the U.S. and Canada), Merck KGaA, Novartis, Pfizer, and Sanofi.

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Novartis is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people’s lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world’s top companies investing in research and development. Novartis products reach nearly 800 million people globally and we are finding innovative ways to expand access to our latest treatments. About 109,000 people of more than 145 nationalities work at Novartis around the world. Find out more at <https://www.novartis.com>.

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About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Mark Suzman and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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