An open letter to leaders as negotiations get underway on the Political Declaration for the UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

Enough. It Is Time to Get Deadly Serious.

The world is failing to identify, prevent and stop outbreaks and tackle pandemic threats

To all Heads of State and Government, Ministers of State, Finance and Health, Heads of international organizations, and agencies who have the power to prevent and contain disease outbreaks:

In Geneva and in New York, it's time to make decisions that will prevent and stop infectious disease outbreaks from killing people, draining economies and further fraying societal trust. The incremental changes to date to the international system for outbreak and pandemic prevention and readiness have not been enough.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the death of some 22 million people and cost trillions. It was a "never again" moment.

And yet, even as the international community negotiates the future of pandemic preparedness, a preventable disaster is again playing out.

The "Bundibugyo" strain of Ebola virus — not new, but known — is killing people who are already vulnerable to insecurity and poverty. This outbreak will cost many lives, hundreds of millions of dollars, and many months of effort to contain. Last month, the Andes hantavirus — not new but known — triggered a major international response to an outbreak that may have been preventable. And mpox — not new, but known — previously spread from animals to humans. It is now spreading among humans.

Three outbreaks. All of them known pathogens. All of them predictable. None of them prevented.

What makes this more confounding is what happened while these events were still fresh. UN Member States agreed to schedule the High-Level Meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response for the final Friday of United Nations General Assembly week — a day when many heads of state and government have already left New York, and those who remain have their minds on flights home.

Here is where we stand. Since COVID-19, the world has made some progress including adoption of the amended International Health Regulations and strengthened regional collaboration. But it is not ready for a new pandemic threat.

There is an incomplete Pandemic Agreement. There are too few new national outbreak and pandemic plans. The call for $15 billion per year for pandemic prevention and preparedness has not come close to being met. There was a pledge to have diagnostics, vaccines and treatments ready within 100 days of a new threat being identified — and while there has been progress, for Bundibugyo, that will not happen.

At a time when humanity can sequence pathogens in hours, develop vaccines in months, and deploy artificial intelligence across entire economies, the world already has many of the tools it needs. The question is whether leaders will choose to invest in and use them.

We can no longer accept this cycle of panic and neglect.

In New York this September at the UNGA High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response and in Geneva through the WHO Pandemic Agreement process, we are asking you to:

- **Finalize and ratify the WHO Pandemic Agreement** — as rapidly as possible and implement it.
- **Establish fair, predictable, and accessible financing** — for sustained prevention and preparedness investment, including for the 100 Days Mission, and for rapid emergency deployment when threats emerge. The current system remains fragmented and vastly under-funded.
- **Implement the One Health approach** — translate existing commitments into national and regional action plans that integrate human, animal and environmental health.
- **Accelerate a pathway to regional self-reliance** — including in the research, development, and manufacturing of medical countermeasures, with clear milestones and including technology transfer and capacity building.
- **Lay the groundwork to establish an outbreak and pandemic risk and readiness monitoring framework** — that tracks the full continuum from emerging risks, risk reduction, prevention and preparedness capacity through to response and recovery, pinpointing where weak spots remain and where investment is needed at every level.

We also call on all sides involved in conflict in the region affected by Bundibugyo Ebola to agree to a ceasefire so this outbreak can be ended.

Ebola. Hantavirus. Mpox. All since COVID-19. All predictable. All warnings.

These must be the last “rare but known” diseases that will surprise us. As we learned with COVID-19, in this very decade, they are only a warning of what a pandemic-prone pathogen could do.

A pandemic threat will come. The world is not ready. We have no choice but to demand political courage, sustained investment, and action.

To choose otherwise is indefensible.

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"Enough. It Is Time to Get Deadly Serious."

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