

7 November 2019

Roberto Speranza
Ministro della Salute

Dear Minister Speranza:

We are writing to express our strong support for Dr Luca Li Bassi, the current Director General of Agenzia Italiana del Farmaco (AIFA). His work has been key to Italian leadership in introducing transparency in medicine as a global issue, as reflected in the World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution WHA72.8 approved on 28 May 2019.

All of the undersigned work to promote reforms in national, European and global frameworks to make quality medicines, vaccines, diagnostic tests, and new medical technologies, such as cell and gene therapies available and affordable. Many of us worked with Dr Li Bassi during his earlier efforts to provide access to affordable drugs for the treatment of HIV in developing countries. His work in establishing the Global Price Reporting Mechanism (GPRM) at The Global Fund has been recognised as an example of the value and feasibility of implementing transparency policies in the pharmaceutical sector.

More recently, we have seen Italy play an enormously important role in successfully advocating for the adoption of a resolution on “Improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines, and other health products” at the May 2019 meeting of the WHA.

It is difficult to convey how great a challenge it was to get the WHA to consider, let alone approve a resolution dealing with transparency, given the longstanding drift towards greater secrecy and less transparency in every aspect of the development and pricing of medicines. Dr Li Bassi played a key role in overcoming enormous opposition from vested interests; his expertise, commitment, compassion, diplomatic skills and tirelessness were critical to the adoption of the resolution. It is very rare to see a senior government official do so much in such a short time to raise awareness across the global community of the need to change course on issues fundamental to - and perceived as contrary to - the interests of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the world.

Many of the challenges facing the citizens of Italy are influenced by global or European Union norms and regulations. The fact that Dr Li Bassi is held in very high regard throughout the global community and within the European Union provides Italy with an important opportunity to advance the most transformative changes to make medical technologies more affordable and more universally available to people who need them.

In addition to his work on transparency, Dr Li Bassi is one of the leading exponents of strategies to make new technologies, such as cell and gene therapies, more affordable. To this end, his

effort to empower Italian research institutions to develop new CAR-T therapies within the public health system, is extremely important not only for Italy, but also as a progressive example for other countries. He has reached out to the leading scientific, technical and legal experts to advance this work, and has done so at a very critical moment, given the emerging regulatory, legal and reimbursement regimes that are only now being tested. Italy is one of the few countries to undertake pro-active assessments of possible ways forward in these areas, and this is largely the result of Dr Li Bassi's willingness to challenge the status quo and to prioritize the public interest.

We urge you to enable Dr Li Bassi to continue in his current position; he is a key asset for public health in Italy and for the entire global community.

Sincerely

Groups

- Access to Medicines Ireland
- Act Up-Basel
- Alianza LAC-GLOBAL por el Acceso a Medicamentos
- ARAS - Romanian Association Against AIDS
- Asociación de Acceso Justo al Medicamento (España)
- Cancer Alliance (South Africa)
- Consumer Association the Quality of Life-EKPIZO
- Corporación Innovarte (Chile)
- Fundación IFARMA (Colombia)
- Health Action International (HAI)
- Knowledge Ecology International Europe (KEI Europe)
- Misión Salud
- Observatoire de la transparence dans les politiques du médicament (France)
- ONG santé Diabète (Mali)
- PEAH – Policies for Equitable Access to Health
- Public Eye (Switzerland)
- Salud por Derecho
- Salud y Fármacos EE.UU.
- STOPAIDS
- Union for Affordable Cancer Treatment
- Yolse (Switzerland)

Individuals

- Andy Gray BPharm MSc(Pharm) FPS FFIP, Senior Lecturer, Division of Pharmacology, Discipline of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Health Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
- Chikosa Banda, University of Malawi.
- Edward Low, Positive Malaysian Treatment Access & Advocacy Group, Malaysia.
- Ellen 't Hoen, LL.M PhD, Director Medicines Law & Policy University Medical Centre Groningen - Global Health Unit
- Fernando Lamata, Advisory Council, Ministry of Health, Spain
- Fifi Rahman, Board Member for NGOs at Unitaids, affiliated with Health Poverty Action; and PhD Candidate, Intellectual Property and International Trade, University of Leeds
- Gilberto de Lima Lopes Junior, MD, MBA, FAMS., Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine, Medical Director for International Programs, Leader, Global Oncology Program, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine
- James Love, Director, Knowledge Ecology International.
- Joel Lexchin MD, Professor Emeritus, School of Health Policy and Management, Faculty of Health, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Jordan Jarvis, DrPH Candidate, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- Kaitlin Mara, Medicines Law & Policy
- Kirsten Myhr, MScPharm, MPH (Norway)
- Luz Marina Umbasia Bernal, Global Humanitarian Progress GHP Corp
- Manon Röss, cancer patient
- Marcus Low, SECTION27, South Africa
- Melissa Barber, PhD student, Harvard University
- Michel Kazatchkine, Senior Fellow, the Global Health Center, Graduate Institute for International Affairs and development, Geneva
- Mohga Kamal-Yanni MBE, Global health Consultant, UK
- Patrick Durisch, Public Eye
- Pauline Londeix, OTMeds co-founder, France
- Ruth Lopert, Adjunct Professor, Department of Health Policy & Management, George Washington University
- Salome Meyer, cancer patient advocate
- Suerie Moon, Graduate Institute of Geneva
- Wim Vandeveld, GNP+, South Africa