

Minister Milling speech at the CEPI Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit 2022

Good afternoon everyone once again. And I would like to start by thanking everyone for taking part in this global pandemic preparedness summit. It has been fantastic for the UK to welcome so many people both in person and online and to take part in such a rich discussion and to show our collective support for CEPI's pioneering work.

But while we gather here in London on the critical agenda of pandemic preparedness, I know that many of us will also be thinking about the horrors being committed by President Putin on the peaceful people of Ukraine. And I'm sure you will want to join me confirming that our thoughts and prayers are with Ukraine today as we condemn this unjustified war. I am proud the UK is providing critical medical supplies as part of our wider humanitarian support. Six flights have departed so far with over 500,000 items. So we remember Ukraine.

But through this summit, we also show that responsible countries and partners are still coming together to build a better, safer world. We are not deflected from that critical mission. The commitments made today in support of CEPI show our determination to learn the lessons from Covid and to build our collective health defences.

Together, we put our money where our mouth is, and raised a total of over 1.5 billion US dollars towards CEPI's fundraising goal.

And many industry partners have made their own commitments today to deliver real progress towards making the 100 days mission a reality with a joint statement of intent now published and signed between the UK government, CEPI and industry.

This is not just an investment in CEPI and their ground-breaking research. It's an investment in global resilience against disease

An investment in a healthier future in which the 100 days mission is a reality.

CEPI has more than proven its worth in the global response to COVID-19.

Their investment in 14 vaccine partnerships, which made up one of the world's largest vaccine portfolios, helped give world's scientists – including our researchers in Oxford – a head-start in their race to save lives. Every deal that CEPI has struck has had equitable access to vaccines at its heart.

And they have shown steadfast leadership on making vaccines available across the world in this pandemic, through their work to launch the ACT-Accelerator and the COVAX facility.

And we have also heard today about CEPI's work on boosting vaccine manufacturing to give all regions the ownership they need on this agenda.

Today, on International Women's Day, we have also heard how pandemics have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who often carry the burden of being primary carers or frontline health workers and are often at high risk of infection or complications, particularly pregnant and nursing women.

CEPI, with their commitment to vaccine equity is a key part of the solution for women, girls, and other marginalised groups and vulnerable populations. And women have been at the forefront of vaccine development, as brilliant scientists who've stepped-up over the past two years and saved millions of lives. In the face of devastating impacts of COVID-19, this has been science's finest hour.

And I'd particularly like to recognise: Professor Dame Sarah Gilbert, and her work to create the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine; Dr Nita Patel – who led the development of Novavax; And Dr Katalin Karikó, who paved the way for the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines.

However, we also know that COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic we face.

Future pandemics could pose an even more severe threat, so we have to stay vigilant and, as an international community, prepare to respond to the unknown Disease X, whatever it is and wherever it emerges in the world.

Today has shown why CEPI's target to have safe vaccines ready within 100 days for a future outbreak and to develop vaccines for their priority pathogens is so important.

The UK championed the 100 days mission under our G7 Presidency and we have committed £160 million towards the total raised today as a critical down payment against CEPI's plan to make 100 days mission a reality.

And the UK is proud to continue our steadfast collaboration with CEPI, through their newly announced partnership with the University of Cambridge's DioSynVax. This partnership will develop vaccines that are broadly protective against a range of beta coronaviruses including potential new variants.

Achieving this will require the best of the public and private sectors working together earlier and on a global scale and CEPI is a key partner when it comes to realising this goal.

That is why the UK could not be prouder to host this summit, or be pleased that this summit has raised over 1.5 billion dollars today for CEPI. This is a fantastic start toward CEPI's 5 year strategy and I look forward to more of our international partners coming forward to support CEPI's mission, and to pledge funds in the coming weeks following this summit for this vital work.

Together, we are not just turning the tide against COVID-19, but we are ensuring the world comes out of this pandemic stronger and safer for the future.

Thank you for making that possible.