

# PM hails 'herculean effort' of life science companies to defeat coronavirus

- Prime Minister discusses vaccine progress and pandemic preparedness at meeting with Bill Gates and top life science companies.
- Ten CEOs set out huge collaborative effort to boost innovation and manufacturing for coronavirus vaccines, treatments and diagnostics, after positive results from the Pfizer trial.
- Participants welcome UK leadership in research, innovation and financing to defeat the pandemic.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosted Bill Gates and the heads of ten leading life science and pharmaceutical companies for a virtual discussion this afternoon, [Tuesday 10th] to address how government, industry and civil society can work together to defeat coronavirus and prevent future pandemics.

The CEOs of Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol Myers Squibb, GSK, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Novartis AG, Pfizer, Roche and Sanofi joined the meeting.

Following yesterday's announcement of promising results in the Pfizer / BioNTech vaccine trials, the CEOs described the unprecedented collaborative effort across their industry to develop new technologies and treatments at pace that will bring the virus under control in the UK and around the world.

They re-committed to help ensure equitable global access to any successful COVID-19 vaccine and called for investment in R&D and support for open supply chains and innovation.

The Prime Minister underscored the UK's leadership in this area – such as investing over £800 million in COVAX and other global vaccine initiatives – and the government's preparedness to manufacture and distribute a safe and effective vaccine at scale in the UK.

He also outlined the UK's five-point plan to prevent future pandemics, first set out at UNGA, and asked for industry's support to develop and implement the recommendations. The plan includes creating a global network of zoonotic disease research hubs, expanding manufacturing capacity for vaccines and treatments, and agreeing international protocols for health crises.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Defeating coronavirus and preventing future pandemics is a truly global endeavour, requiring ingenuity, tenacity and a spirit of openness to succeed.

Bill Gates sounded the alarm on the world's lack of preparation for a major health crisis long before most of us had heard the word 'coronavirus' – and now we must heed his call to stop something like this ever happening again.

I heard today about the herculean joint effort that life science companies and research institutions are undertaking to tackle this disease at record speed. The UK will use our G7 presidency next year to support this global endeavour and protect our citizens at home, now and in the future.

Addressing the roundtable, Bill Gates welcomed the commitment from life-science companies to expand equitable access and set out why we need to take steps now to prepare for future health emergencies.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Co-Chair, Bill Gates, said:

Every head of state is thinking about two questions right now: How can we end the current pandemic? And how can we prevent the next one?

To answer those questions, the world needs a comprehensive strategy; a coherent approach to financing and manufacturing billions of doses of vaccines, tests and drugs; and a network to monitor for new threats.

We're fortunate that Prime Minister Johnson has come up with a smart plan to do just that in the UK, and our foundation will continue to work with his government and others to make it a reality.

Albert Bourla, Chairman and CEO of Pfizer Inc said:

During this pandemic, the only enemy is the virus, and time. We are in a new era of collaboration for problem solving and appreciate the Gates Foundation and Prime Minister Johnson's leadership to help the world be better prepared for future pandemics.

Emma Walmsley, CEO of GSK:

We very much welcome the efforts of the UK Government to address future pandemic preparedness. The Prime Minister has the opportunity of the upcoming UK G7 Presidency to bring leadership to this and GSK stands ready to support.