International agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response: state of play

One Health dimension

Rico Beviglia Zampetti, Adviser to the Director General on the External Dimension of Health

Dr. Faye Ioannou, dHoU F2
Why a new treaty on pandemics?

• COVID-19 revealed how badly the world is prepared to prevent and control pandemics. The enormous challenge posed by COVID-19 created an unprecedented push for renewed global rules.

• Many issues requiring global solutions currently beyond the scope and mandate of the existing International Health Regulations:
  ➢ e.g. Equitable access to countermeasures, pathogen sharing or genome sequence information, etc.
Why a new treaty on pandemics?

• Important to ensure **higher, sustained and long-term political engagement** at the level of world leaders or states of governments.

• Treaties must be **translated into national law** following their ratification, thus binding all relevant sectors and the government as a whole to comply.

• As the lead authority in international health cooperation, **WHO the most natural host of the new treaty.**
Path to new treaty on pandemics

• **Op-ed of March 2021:**
  - A group of 25 heads of state and government, joined by the President of the European Council and the Director General of WHO, called for an international treaty on pandemics.
  - Countries later formed a Group of Friends of the treaty.

• **Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly, in May 2021:**
  - Decision to convene a special session in November 2021 to consider the benefits of developing a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument.
  - Leadership role of the EU in the adoption of the Decision.
Path to new treaty on pandemics

• **Special session of the World Health Assembly, held from 29 November to 1 December 2021:**
  
  ➢ Adoption of the **Decision SSA2(5) « The World Together »** to:
    a) launch a global process for the negotiation of a new international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response,
    b) establish an intergovernmental negotiating body to draft and negotiate a legally binding agreement
  
  ➢ The decision defines the timelines and modalities for the negotiation process, but does not define possible areas of the instrument.
Timeline and modalities for the negotiation

• **By 1 March 2022:** 1st meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to elect its 2 co-chairs and 4 vice-chairs (1 from each of the 6 WHO regions) and agree on its working methods and timelines.

• **By 1 August 2022:** 2nd meeting of the INB to discuss progress on a working draft of the new instrument(s).

• INB progress report to the 76th World Health Assembly in 2023.

• INB public hearings to inform its deliberations

• **INB to submit its outcome for consideration by the 77th World Health Assembly in 2024.**
Path to new treaty on pandemics  
(EU internal procedure)

- **Recommendation for a Council Decision authorizing the opening of negotiations on behalf of the EU** for the conclusion of an international agreement on pandemic preparedness and response as well as of complementary amendments to the International Health Regulations:
  - Adopted by the Commission on 1 December 2021
  - The objective is to:
    a) Authorise the Commission to open and conduct negotiations,
    b) Nominate the Commission as EU negotiator
    c) Secure the full participation of the Union as regional economic integration organisation for the matters falling within EU competence.
  - Discussions in Council currently ongoing. The French Presidency intends to reach an agreement on the negotiating directives by end of February.
Content of new treaty on pandemics

• The future agreement needs to be:
  
  ➢ **Ambitious** in context of building resilience for pandemics, mobilizing financial resources collectively, and ensuring universal access to diagnostics, treatments and vaccines based on the **principles of solidarity, equity, accountability, and transparency**.

  ➢ **Complementary to IHR (2005)**, by covering topics not addressed by the IHR, such as:
    
    – Maintaining global supply chain and equitable access to countermeasures,
    – Prevention and management of zoonotic risks as part of the **One Health approach**, 
    – Addressing antimicrobial resistance,
    – Sharing of pathogens and genome sequence information.
WHO, FAO, OIE and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) agreed in December 2021 the operational definition of One Health as proposed by their advisory panel, the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP):

**One Health** is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate change.
New pandemic treaty and One Health

• New, preventive dimension in confronting pandemics, not covered by existing international systems.
• Measures to better prevent, detect and respond to pathogen spillover from animals to humans.
• Establishment of needed legal umbrella for closely linked issues of pandemic risk intelligence and assessments, as well as multi-sectoral action.
• Establishment of interagency tools and legal links to the work of FAO, OIE and UNEP, the WHO’s One Health partners.
• Creation of necessary bridges to other relevant treaties to which all or majority of WHO’s Member States are already parties, providing health perspective (e.g. wild-life trade, biodiversity and land use).
New pandemic treaty - Next steps

Technical support by SANTE expertise from both Food and Health Pillar on One Health approach will play an important role.
Thank you,

Rico Beviglia Zambetti, America.BEVIGLIA-ZAMPETTI@ec.europa.eu

Faye Ioannou, Faye.ioannou@ec.europa.eu


Unless otherwise noted the reuse of this presentation is authorised under the CC BY 4.0 license. For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the EU, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective right holders.