10 October 2023 – In December 2021, at its second-ever special session, the World Health Assembly took a significant step by establishing an Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) tasked with drafting and negotiating a convention, agreement or other international instrument under the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO). This historic endeavour aims to strengthen global pandemic prevention, preparedness and response efforts. The INB's mission is firmly grounded in the principles of inclusiveness, transparency, efficiency, Member State leadership and consensus.

This historic endeavour represents a unified commitment by WHO Member States to collaborate on a global scale. The world's past experiences have shown that facing challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitates international cooperation, transcending isolationism and nationalism. The stark reality is that nobody is safe until everyone is safe. Understanding this, the 194 Member States have resolved to work together towards the development of a new international instrument for pandemic preparedness and response.

This commitment signifies a critical milestone in raising pandemic preparedness to the highest political level. Rooted in WHO's constitution, the envisioned agreement has the potential to reinforce existing international health instruments, particularly the International Health Regulations. It will serve as a solid foundation upon which to build and improve our collective pandemic response efforts.

One key aspect of this effort is fostering an all-of-government and all-of-society approach. This involves strengthening the capacities and resilience of countries, regions and the world at large to effectively combat future pandemics. Achieving this may involve substantial international collaboration, including the improvement of alert systems, data sharing mechanisms, research endeavours, and the production and distribution of critical medical public health resources like vaccines, diagnostics and personal protective equipment.

Additionally, the new accord could acknowledge the One Health approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of human, animal and planetary health. To materialize this vision, WHO will provide support to its Member States in their collective efforts and facilitate the active engagement of relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector.

As the INB progresses in its mission, the world must recognize that pandemic preparedness

requires global leadership and a health system that is fit for the current millennium. To transform this commitment into reality, we must be guided by principles of solidarity, fairness, transparency, inclusiveness and equity.

Pandemic preparedness accord: its inception and evolution

The pandemic preparedness accord is a significant international effort initiated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to enhance global preparedness and response to pandemics. Here are key points regarding its inception and development.

1. International instruments: International agreements like conventions, framework agreements and treaties play a crucial role in addressing global challenges such as health crises, climate change and security threats.

2. International Health Regulations (2005): Rooted in WHO's constitution, these regulations were established to prevent, protect against and respond to the international spread of diseases while minimizing disruptions to international traffic and trade.

3. COVID-19 pandemic and impact: The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for a comprehensive international approach to pandemic preparedness and response. Loss of life, societal disruption and developmental setbacks prompted governments to seek lasting solutions.

4. Equity focus: Central to the proposed accord is the commitment to ensure equitable access to pandemic prevention tools, healthcare and expertise for all populations.

5. WHO Member States' agreements: WHO Member States have previously developed legally binding agreements, including the WHO constitution, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and the International Health Regulations to promote global health and cooperation.

6. Establishment of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB): In December 2021, WHO's 194 Member States decided to create the INB, comprising representatives from all regions. Its

purpose is to draft and negotiate a new international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response under Article 19 of WHO's constitution.

7. INB's work phases: The INB has undergone multiple phases of work, including:

A first phase from February to June 2022 to establish working procedures.

A second phase from July 2022, focusing on potential elements of the accord.

Production of a Conceptual Zero Draft in December 2022, serving as a bridge between the Working Draft and the Zero Draft.

Member States' agreement that the Zero Draft serves as the basis for negotiations, with textual proposals and progress reports presented.

8. Engagement and inclusivity: The INB process actively engages Member States and stakeholders through written and oral inputs, regional consultations, focused discussions, public hearings and regular briefings.

9. Submission timeline: The INB aims to submit its final outcome to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2024.

10. Iterative approach: The INB has focused on successive iterations of working documents, including the Conceptual Zero Draft and the Zero Draft, with ongoing discussions to refine the accord's content.

The pandemic preparedness accord, driven by the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, is an international effort led by WHO Member States to enhance global readiness and equity in

responding to pandemics. The INB plays a central role in drafting and negotiating this crucial agreement, aiming for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to pandemic preparedness and response.

Related resources

Intergovernmental Negotiating Body

https://inb.who.int/

Q&As: pandemic prevention, preparedness and response accord

https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/pandemic-prevention--preparedness-and-response-accord

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