



PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Interactive multistakeholder hearing as part of the preparatory process toward the High-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

Trusteeship Council Chamber
United Nations Headquarters, New York
9 May 2023, 10.00 am to 1.00pm

CONCEPT NOTE

I. Background

In accordance with UN General Assembly resolutions 76/301 and 77/275, a High-level meeting (HLM) on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR) will be convened on 20 September 2023. As part of the preparatory process for the high-level meeting, the President of the General Assembly was requested with the support of the World Health Organization, and other relevant partners, to organize and preside over an interactive multi-stakeholder hearing, no later than June 2023.

II. Objective

The emergence of new epidemic diseases increased geopolitical conflict, the collapse of trade leading to famine and shortages of essential goods, the intensification of ecological degradation and climate change – taken in isolation, any of these trends would pose a serious challenge to global health and prosperity, but the evidence of the past few decades tells us that these trends are increasingly interacting in complex and unpredictable ways. The COVID-19 pandemic showed that national governments and the global multi-lateral system are ill-equipped to deal with the scale and complexity of health emergencies, including to address secondary impacts, which require a multi-sectoral approach.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the greatest global challenges in the history of the United Nations, with a deep impact on health and the loss of life, mental health and well-being. It has a negative impact on global humanitarian needs, on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the enjoyment of human rights and across all spheres of society, including on livelihoods, food security and nutrition, and education, the exacerbation of poverty and hunger, disruption to economies, trade, societies and the environment. It caused exacerbation of economic and social inequalities within and among countries, which is reversing hard-won development gains and hampering progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and all its Goals and targets.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed serious shortcomings at the national, regional and global levels in preparedness for, timely and effective prevention and detection of, and response to potential health emergencies, including in the capacity and resilience of health systems, indicating the need to better prepare for future health emergencies.

Currently, into the third year of the pandemic, there are ongoing efforts underway, mainly – through Intergovernmental Negotiating Body, which will draft and negotiate a World Health Organization convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as through the working group on the International Health Regulations that will consider amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005); and

finally through the work undertaken by the WHO Secretariat on strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that pandemic prevention, preparedness and response requires a multi-sectoral and whole-of-government approach, so therefore is important to address socio-economic, gender, human rights, educational impacts, which are all areas of traditional focus of the UNGA. It will be important also to look at how the HLM can be leveraged to support countries in building capacities and encourage investments in a multi-sectoral approach to PPPR, such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and advancing multilateral financing, and other areas of support.

The purpose of the hearing is to get views from all stakeholders on these dimensions of pandemic preparedness prevention and response:

- on urgent actions and investments needed in and by all sectors, in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response
- provide a key opportunity to identify how the political declaration of the high-level meeting can provide political support to the processes underway in Geneva
- bring focus to the multi-sectoral nature of pandemics and the need to galvanize a whole of government and whole of society approach, which will contribute to accelerating progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

To ensure synergies across the three health-related processes of the General Assembly, the multistakeholder hearings as part of the preparatory process of the High-level meetings on universal health coverage and on the fight against tuberculosis will be convened back-to-back with the multistakeholder hearing on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Ensuring coherence across the three High-level meetings is a priority for the President of the General Assembly and the co-facilitators of the three health-related processes, in line with the statements made by Member States during consultations.

III. Participants

The hearing seeks to have the active participation of appropriate senior-level representatives of Member States and members of the United Nations specialized agencies, observers of the General Assembly, parliamentarians, representatives of local government, relevant United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, invited civil society organizations, philanthropic foundations, academia, medical associations, the private sector and broader communities, ensuring the participation and voices of women, children, youth and Indigenous Peoples. The hearing will be webcast live on UN WebTV.

IV. Format

The half-day interactive hearing will be divided into an opening segment, two interactive panel discussions and a closing segment.

Each panel will feature up to four-five speakers, including representatives of multi-stakeholder constituencies and other networks/agencies with diverse backgrounds. Sessions will include statements from panelists, stories from the field related to the theme of the session, audience polling on specific questions and facilitated discussions with the panelists to answer questions raised from the floor. At the end of the session, moderators will wrap up and summarize key points. Priority of interventions from the floor (approximately 15-20 interventions per session) will be given to joint statements of global, regional or country constituencies of non-governmental organizations,

civil society organisations, academic institutions, philanthropic foundations, health professional associations and the private sector. There will be no preestablished list of speakers and participants will be invited to indicate their interest to intervene during the panels.

Panel 1: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic: the case for Pandemic, Prevention, Preparedness and Response

- While WHO and others have consistently raised the alarm for investment in PPPR, it was during the COVID-19 pandemic that the international community fully realized its criticality, when even the most advanced health systems were not adequately prepared. As we are moving beyond the initial response phase of the pandemic, it is time to take stock of experiences and lessons learned so that we can prepare for the future.
- **Multi-sectoral engagement:** While the core of PPPR is health systems strengthening, the COVID-19 pandemic showed us that preparedness and response goes beyond the health sector, and requires a multi-sectoral approach, at the global, regional, national and local levels.
- **Leave No One Behind:** The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light inequities amongst countries, but also in countries. It laid bare risks that have been ignored for decades, from inadequate health systems, to gaps in social protection and structural inequities. It is especially critical to focus on the most vulnerable people and those disproportionately impacted in different operational contexts, including those in low-resource settings, conflict situations and displaced communities.
- **Combatting mis/disinformation:** Misinformation and disinformation causes unacceptable harm. It can undermine public health responses, threaten social cohesion and fuel violence and conflict. False and misleading information costs lives and hinders global efforts to fight health threats. To date, we have seen a range of efforts at all levels to call out and respond to misinformation and disinformation. It is important to take stock of experiences and share best practices for the future.

Panel 2: Investing in Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response

- COVID-19 has highlighted the pressing need for action to build stronger capacities to respond to future pandemics. Investing now will save lives and resources for years to come. Investments need to be made in research and development, training of health workers,
- **Developing national/local capacities:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for all countries to have strengthened prevention, preparedness and response capacities. This includes strengthening health systems, building capacity of the health work force, strengthening progress in research and development, sustainable provision for social protection and other essential services, as well as increasing multi-sectoral crisis management and response. It is important to address how investments in infrastructure, transport systems and education support the health sector in times of crises.
- **Financing:** In order to support countries' PPPR efforts, funding mechanisms have been established, such as the Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response and the Pandemic Fund.

VI. Outcome

The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the hearing prior to the high-level meeting.