

Conclusion of Pandemic Agreement Negotiations

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Health Action International (HAI) welcomes the [conclusion of negotiations](#) of an agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response just weeks ahead of the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA). It has been a long and challenging journey to get to this point.

We commend the efforts of governments and appreciate the continued support provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) secretariat. Civil Society was granted a gradually increasing presence in this process, which allowed more organisations to contribute expertise and knowledge to deliberations. It is, however, unfortunate that no greater or earlier access was accorded despite public support from many Member State delegations.

While the agreed text is far from what we had hoped and pushed for, it equips the international community with a tool to face pandemic outbreaks and other health emergencies, recognised by the overwhelming majority of countries globally. When taken with the amendments to the International Health Regulations, the conclusion of this agreement leaves global health governance and, more specifically, pandemic preparedness and response on a more solid footing. Seen in the context of recent shocks in policy and funding affecting WHO—and multilateralism more broadly—this is a positive outcome.

Content of the agreement

The agreed text supports the use of TRIPS flexibilities, sets a somewhat convoluted framework for technology transfer, and enshrines One Health as a universal approach to antimicrobial resistance. Disappointingly, it does not establish a workable and fair Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) system that takes into account the need for equitable access to pandemic related health technologies.

It must also be pointed out that priorities of high-income countries and pharmaceutical industry were acknowledged and made it to the final text (especially in connection with intellectual property protection and the voluntary nature of technology transfer). Yet, low- and middle-income countries were compelled (on occasions by the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body) to accept compromises and remove a number of proposals, including on PABS and financing.

What's Next?

This agreement is not the end of the process and efforts from all parties will now be needed to ensure ratification, implementation and adaptation to local and regional realities. The role of WHO in leading its implementation will undoubtedly be hindered by current funding troubles ignited by the US withdrawal from the organisation.

Finally, these negotiations have allowed for renewed discussions that put the imbalances in biomedical research and development squarely on the agenda.

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