

Statement to the Eighth meeting of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005).

22 April 2024

Thank you Chair,

Health Action International welcomes the opportunity to address this session of the Working Group to amend the International Health Regulations (IHR). We commend the efforts of the Bureau, Secretariat and Member States resulting in an extended, comprehensive text.

We must, however, express our dissatisfaction at the lack of concrete and enforceable measures regarding critical aspects of the global response to international health emergencies, including, but not limited to, pandemics.

From access to health goods and data to financing, we notice a concerted effort by some governments to water down and remove suggested amendments seeking to scale up production, diversify manufacturing and guarantee steady supply of health technologies.

This is particularly worrisome regarding equity, a principle this new text fails to operationalise and yet is acknowledged in the IHR from 2005 and endorsed by the Executive Board decision setting out the mandate for this Working Group. There cannot be an equitable response when the concerns of the majority are not addressed. The deletion of any reference to access and benefit-sharing schemes is a case in point.

There is clearly some overlap between this WGIHR and the endeavours of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to conclude a pandemic agreement or other international instrument.

However, even though some synergies may be found between the two processes, we believe it is of the utmost importance not to evade the responsibility and opportunity that this group has to improve coordination and effectiveness of the international response to pandemics and other health emergencies.

We are convinced that the political will of a majority of World Health Organization Member States shall suffice to reflect the concerns and hopes pinned on this Working Group by so many.

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