



High-level panel at the second Global Conference on SDG16

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), and the Government of Italy

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Thank you, Director-General Beagle, and thank you to you and your colleagues at the International Development Law organization for hosting this important event, along with Under-Secretary General Liu Zhenmin and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the Government of Italy.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was lagging behind in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. The pandemic has put us even further off track for all the goals, including SDG-16.

The pandemic is so much more than a health crisis. It has torn at the very fabric of multilateralism, and exposed geopolitical fault lines, inequalities and the deficit of trust in public institutions.

It has demonstrated that good governance can be the difference between life and death.

WHO has played a leading role in the response to the pandemic since its beginning, as chair of the UN Crisis Management Team.

We have brought together scientists and public health experts from around the world, to analyze the evolving evidence and distil it into guidance; and we have brought together partners to form the ACT Accelerator and COVAX; and we have brought together world leaders to foster the political solidarity that is badly needed.

The pandemic is still a long way from over. Globally, the number of weekly cases is at a record high, 3 million people have died and deaths are increasing.

The inequitable distribution of vaccines is adding fuel to the fire, and costing lives.

Even as we continue to respond to the pandemic, we must also learn the lessons it is teaching us.

As countries recover and rebuild, strong public health capacities and resilient health systems will be essential, not only for health security, but for all of the other health threats countries face.

Countries need to ensure that their health systems can flexibly and inclusively adapt and surge to meet the increased demands of a health emergency, while minimizing disruption to essential health services.

For countries to achieve greater resilience, a coordinated and sustained whole-of-society approach is needed that ensures the inclusive participation and contribution of all sectors and segments of society.

In fragile, conflict and vulnerable settings, WHO is working hand-in-hand with key partners including UNDESA and UN OCHA.

We are also working with mechanisms such as The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee reference group on Early Warning, Early Action and Readiness, and the Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration.

The goal of these partnerships is to not only improve collaboration, coherence and coordination among humanitarian, development and peace partners, it is also to address the underlying vulnerabilities that continue to fuel crises.

Many of these underlying issues are now being exacerbated by the pandemic.

Addressing the humanitarian, health, development and peace challenges in fragile settings, such as the Sahel, is a top priority for WHO.

We must improve mechanisms for joint planning, sustainable financing and strengthening donor coordination, to increase resilience and to reduce the reliance on humanitarian assistance.

And even as we fight to bring the pandemic to an end, WHO is continuing to support all countries to address gaps in their national capacities for prevention, detection and response to public health threats.

We must learn the lessons of this pandemic, and break the cycle of panic and neglect we have seen after so many other emergencies such as outbreaks of SARS, H5N1, H1N1 and Ebola.

Many countries are now coalescing behind the idea of an international framework convention on pandemic preparedness and response, to enhance international cooperation and solidarity;

And to strengthen to the implementation of the International Health Regulations.

As the UN specialized agency for health, the framework convention would be rooted in the constitution of WHO, with its unique global convening power and mandate.

Let me leave you with three priorities:

First, we call on all governments to maintain a comprehensive approach, with a tailored and consistent application of public health and social measures, including equitable distribution of vaccines, as described in WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan.

Second, we call on all countries and multilateral agencies to engage with the process of developing the Framework Convention on Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

And third, we call on all countries to increase their investments in resilient health systems, built on strong primary health care, as the best defense against health emergencies, and in peaceful, productive and sustainable societies.

I thank you.

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