

Agenda Item 15.1: Strengthening the global architecture for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience.

Chair,

The Commonwealth which comprises 56 countries, has 33 out of 42 Small States in the world. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these countries as well as other developing countries observed a major challenge in their responses, emphasizing the need for greater preparedness, response and resiliency plans. Through the Secretariat's convening mechanisms, we reviewed experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies from countries, to identify best practices and lessons learnt. Through this, it was found that inequities to access to medical countermeasures was a critical issue, particularly for low- and middle-income countries, as was the stalling and in some cases halting, of progress on pre-pandemic commitments relating to global health priorities such as malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

The new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response will therefore act as an enabler to address the current inequities with balanced rights and obligations in health emergency response to facilitate accessibility, availability and affordability of health products, including the sharing of technology.

The Commonwealth Secretariat will work with the WHO under the Memorandum of Understanding to support countries as they continue with these discussions.

I thank you.