

Seventh Meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to Draft and Negotiate a WHO Convention, Agreement or Other Internal Instrument on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response

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Written Statement by:

- FDI World Dental Federation
- NCD Alliance
- Union for International Cancer Control
- World Heart Federation

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the prevalence of underlying conditions such as noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) increases the vulnerability of populations to pandemics in high-income and low-income countries. Some studies estimate that mortality in 60 to 90 % of COVID-19 cases is attributable to either one or more of these comorbidities. At the same time emerging data suggests that people living with NCDs also experience worse health outcomes from these existing conditions during pandemics as a result of service disruptions, delays, and cancellations of essential health services. This has already been explicitly recognised by the world's leaders in the United General Assembly resolution 73/130.

We welcome continued active consultation with organisations from different segments of society and from around the world through the INB negotiations. We encourage the INB to create further pathways for civil society engagement in the negotiating and drafting of the WHO Pandemic Agreement, including access to relevant documents (including drafts) and right to intervene within both plenary and working group sessions of negotiations.

In response to the draft bureau text of the WHO Pandemic Agreement (16 October 2023), we request Member States to:

- Reinstate “persons with health conditions” within the definition of “persons in vulnerable situations” in Art. 1(i) as originally seen in the zero draft;
- Safeguard specific language on the continuation of essential health services across the continuum of care, particularly for people living with NCDs, during pandemic preparedness, response, and recovery within the WHO Pandemic Agreement, including by reinstating previous draft text commitments to mobilise resources to maintain essential health services during and after a pandemic under Art 20;
- Retain specific language on the protection of health and care workforce during pandemic preparedness, recovery and response within the WHO Pandemic Agreement;
- Retain provisions relating to dealing with or managing conflict of interest, which may arise for a range of bodies involved including the private sector, trusts, industry associations, particularly under Art 20;
- Strengthen language on the role of pandemic prevention, preparedness and response in the progressive realisation of universal health coverage, as it underpins the social and economic wellbeing of all communities and countries.