74th World Health Assembly

Item 17: Public health emergencies: preparedness and response

Joint Statement on the way towards a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response delivered by South Africa on behalf of 26 Proponents of the Pandemic Treaty and Partners.

26 Proponents: Albania, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, European Union, Fiji, Indonesia, Kenya, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom

Partners: Ecuador, Guyana, Iceland, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Oman, Paraguay, the Philippines, Sudan, Turkey, Uruguay, the EU and its Members

Director General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the 26 proponents of the pandemic treaty and our partners: Ecuador, Guyana, Iceland, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Oman, Paraguay, the Philippines, Sudan, Turkey, Uruguay, the EU and its Members.

We thank the Director General as well as the Independent Panel, the IHR Review Committee and the IOAC for their reports.

This pandemic has shown us three things:

- First, most countries around the world were not adequately prepared.
- Second, as the international community, we were not adequately prepared to respond to such a global health crisis together.
- And third, business as usual is not an option anymore. We need to fundamentally change pandemic preparedness and response.

The evaluation panels referred to earlier have also confirmed: the time to act is now. And they have spoken out in favour of a pandemic treaty.

This is why we are very pleased that we have reached consensus at this World Health Assembly to pass a decision that creates a dedicated moment in November 2021 for a Special Session of the World Health Assembly to consider the benefits of such a convention, agreement or other international instrument.

In our view, a pandemic treaty under the roof of the WHO is the preferred way forward to strengthen the multilateral health architecture, including the IHR, and to heed the call by so many experts to reset the system.

The open-ended working group established through the WHO Strengthening resolution will prioritize the assessment of such a way forward and will present its findings to the Special Session.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We heard yesterday from world leaders as well as the UN Secretary General strong support for global cooperation towards a pandemic treaty.

We need to capitalize this momentum to act now, for the next health crisis or indeed other crises are around the corner in today's complex and interconnected world.

Indeed, the 26 proponents of the treaty decision and partners are fully aware that this is not easy as we are all still working tirelessly to address the pandemic.

Probably the most important lesson COVID-19 has taught us is the need for stronger and more agile collective defenses against health threats as well as for building resilience to address future potential pandemics. A new pandemic treaty is central to this and we will continue to work tirelessly and inclusively to turn this vision into reality.

We are committed to seize this moment, and welcome others joining this collective action and our common endeavor for global cooperation and solidarity that extends beyond this crisis.

Thank you.