

PORTUGAL

STATEMENT

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

78TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

(19 – 27 MAY 2025)

*Item.78.-.Intergovernmental.Negotiating.Body.to.draft.and.negotiate.a.WHO.convention?
agreement.or.other.international.instrument.on.pandemic.prevention?preparedness.and.response*

Mr. Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

We welcome the opportunity to intervene under this historic agenda item and wish to express our sincere appreciation for the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body and its Bureau, as well as the WHO Secretariat, in guiding this complex and essential process. We also commend the transparent and inclusive modalities that have allowed all Member States to contribute meaningfully throughout the negotiations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed deep fractures in global cooperation, solidarity, and equity. It has also underscored the irreplaceable role of the World Health Organization as the central and coordinating authority for international health work. In that regard, Portugal supports the adoption of a WHO Pandemic Agreement that strengthens our collective preparedness and response, while safeguarding the principles of equity, solidarity, and sovereign leadership.

We particularly support the Agreement's emphasis on timely and transparent information sharing, on strengthening health systems and the health workforce, and on ensuring equitable access to medical countermeasures. The proposals related to pathogen access and benefit-sharing must be operationalised in a manner that is fair, effective, and sustainable. In this regard, we support ongoing efforts to further develop and test the proposed WHO Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System (PABS).

Portugal attaches great importance to coherence between the Pandemic Agreement and other relevant international instruments, including the International Health Regulations (2005). We believe the two instruments are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Together, they represent a paradigm shift toward more coordinated, just, and resilient global health governance.

Mr. Chair,

While consensus may not reflect full unanimity, it reflects a shared political will to move forward collectively. Portugal is committed to this shared endeavour and to the continued strengthening of the WHO's normative, convening and technical capacities. We will study the final text of the Agreement with due care and look forward to engaging constructively in the next phase, including its implementation.

Let us not squander this opportunity to demonstrate that multilateralism can deliver - especially when lives and livelihoods are at stake.

Thank you.

[332 words]