



Republic of the Gambia
Ministry of Health
The Quadrangle
Banjul

SEVENTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER, GENEVA 18-23 MAY 2026

Agenda Item: 13.3	Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the WHO Pandemic Agreement
Documents:	A79/8
Requested action:	Resolution Adoption
Time limit:	2 minutes
Commission	A

Chair, Director-General, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

The Gambia aligns itself with the statement delivered by **South Africa on behalf of WHO African Region.**

The Gambia continues to support the strong commitment demonstrated throughout the open-ended sessions of the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the WHO Pandemic Agreement to advance a safer, fairer, and more equitable world. We commend the leadership of the Co-Chairpersons from Brazil and the United Kingdom, as well as the Vice-Chairpersons, including the representative of the Kingdom of Eswatini on behalf of our region, for guiding these important negotiations.

The Gambia recognizes that the development of the WHO Pandemic Agreement has been an inclusive, Member State-led process, supported by technical expertise when requested by the IGWG. We support the Bureau's efforts to develop a draft outline that captures the core elements of operations, access, benefit-sharing, and governance. It is essential that the definition of pathogens with pandemic potential is clear, and that the scope of the Annex ensures benefit-sharing as a legally binding and operational certainty rather than a secondary consideration.

We further note that expert selection has adhered to principles of equitable geographical representation and balanced participation from developed and developing countries. This remains crucial to ensuring that technical guidance on

laboratory networks and sequence databases reflects the diverse capacities and realities of health systems globally. The Gambia appreciates ongoing efforts to map expertise and build a comprehensive roster of experts and encourages the Secretariat to continue addressing gaps where necessary.

The Gambia views the coordinating financial mechanism as a critical pillar for effective implementation of the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system. We support the initial informal discussions on its terms of reference and look forward to proposals that ensure sustainable and predictable financing for pandemic preparedness. The interaction between the International Health Regulations (2005) and the PABS system must be clearly defined to avoid legal ambiguity during health emergencies.

We appreciate the progress toward convergence since the adoption of work methods in July 2025 through the sixth meeting in March 2026. The Gambia continues to support the use of legally binding instruments within the PABS system to ensure legal certainty.

Thank you.