



## Questionnaire from the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order

Australian submission

17 June 2021

### **What are the key obstacles to a more effective, inclusive and networked multilateralism to handle the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of both health response and economic recovery?**

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the fundamental need for detection, response and coordination roles. The World Health Organization (WHO) plays a critical role in delivering these roles. Several Member States and evaluation bodies have pointed out the discrepancy between what the world expects WHO to deliver and the resources/capacity it must have to live up to those expectations.

WHO's funding has increasingly relied on voluntary contributions from the private and non-profit sectors, jeopardising predictability of funding to support their work programme. While the WHO is considered a Member State-run organisation, assessed contributions (mandated payments) only account for 17% of the WHO's budget

### **What are the solutions to overcome such obstacles in a fair and sustainable manner (including targeted reforms)?**

The WHO Working Group on Sustainable Financing (WGSF) was established in January 2021 by the 148<sup>th</sup> session of the WHO Executive Board, to discuss sustainable funding for the WHO.

Australia is pleased to contribute to this important work as a member of the WGSF and its Bureau. Australia is committed to improving the sustainability of WHO's financing and building a strong and capable WHO at all levels. We recognise that sustainable, flexible and predictable funding underpins the WHO's ability to strengthen its capabilities across all levels of the Organization

At the last meeting of the WGSF, Member States shortlisted possible approaches to re-structure the volume and nature of contributions made by WHO Member States. These will be discussed in further detail at the next meeting in late June 2021. Consultations on the proposed approach will also take place with WHO Regions between August and October. The WGSF will provide recommendations to the 75th World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2022 through the WHO Executive Board in January 2022 on ways to sustainably finance the organisation.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) recently released their final report on the global response to COVID-19. The IPPR made many recommendations on strengthening the global health architecture so that it is fit for purpose.

Australia is carefully considering the report's recommendations and we are working closely with international partners to take practical steps to strengthen the global health architecture.

Australia appreciates the ongoing work by the WHO on One Health, including establishing a One Health high-level expert panel and preparing guidance for food markets which Member States sought during the initial phases of pandemic response. Member States called for enhanced collaboration among the WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme.

We must continue to strengthen political commitment to and governance of One Health. Cross-agency collaboration at national levels, not just global levels, is key to addressing growing multi-sectoral global health risks posed by zoonotic disease and also antimicrobial resistance.

**What are your views on a new international treaty for pandemic preparedness and response?**

Australia is currently deliberating on the outcomes of the Independent Panel on Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR), International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) Review Committee and Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (IOAC) review mechanisms in order to determine which recommendations are a priority to explore following the 74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly.

Australia is supportive of exploring new mechanisms to strengthen pandemic preparedness and enhance global health outcomes. Australia looks forward to participating in the Member States Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to health Emergencies in order to consider effective mechanisms to ensure the world is better prepared for future pandemics.

Australia supports exploration of mechanisms to maintain political commitment to pandemic preparedness and collective action and implementation of IHR, and potentially goals set by the recently proposed WHO roadmap out of the pandemic.

At the 74<sup>th</sup> WHA in May 2021, Member States agreed to hold a special session of the WHA in November 2021 to consider next steps in relation to the IPPR recommendations, including launching negotiations on a legal instrument (e.g. treaty) on pandemic preparedness and response.