

Permanent Mission
of the
Syrian Arab Republic
Geneva



الجمهورية العربية السورية
البعثة الدائمة لدى مكتب الأمر المنحلة
جنيف

N° 138/21

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures Branch, and with reference to the questionnaire from the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order in preparation of his 2021 reports to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly, which was circulated to all Permanent Missions on 3 May 2021, would like to attach herewith the response of the Syrian Arab Republic to the aforementioned questionnaire.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures Branch, the assurances of its highest consideration.



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.
Special Procedures Branch.

Mandate of: Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order.

**Response of the Syrian Arab Republic to the questionnaire prepared by
the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable
international order**

I. 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?

1. Unilateralism practiced by some countries in addressing and responding to the pandemic which has multiple manifestations, including:

- Resorting to commercial and financial speculation, imposing export and storage restrictions and other aspects of trade barriers and tariffs that impede affordable access to preventive and curative medical goods and equipment, including vaccines, in a timely, equitable and comprehensive manner to all countries.
- Exploitation by high-income countries to the concentration of medical equipment and vaccines production in these countries in order to control the global distribution of these items, as well as imposing restrictions on their accessibility, regardless to differentiation in capacities among countries and in their capabilities to bear the costs.
- Lack of transparency in addressing matters related to producing, distributing and pricing of the vaccine.

2. Unilateral coercive measures:

- Some countries not only continue to impose ucms against other countries, they expand and tighten these measures during the spread of the pandemic, without taking into account their particular negative impacts on health sector which are clear and tangible even in normal situations. These impacts exacerbate in the case of health emergencies, leading to increase in infection rates, and prolonging the pandemic at the global level.
- Ucms contribute to the shortage in preventive and curative medical equipment and tools needed to deal with COVID-19 pandemic in the targeted countries, and hinder their timely availability (supplies for testing and diagnosing the virus, medicines currently used to deal with it, respirators, intensive care beds, ambulances, support for laboratory equipment, equipment for quarantine centres, protective equipment for health workers).
- As a result of restrictions imposed by ucms on mobilizing the financial assets of the targeted countries, these measures impede the use of frozen financial resources in transactions aiming at purchasing preventive and curative equipment, including vaccines.
- One of the direct impacts of ucms that clearly appeared in the context of the pandemic is the denial of access to comprehensive and updated information related to the pandemic, since some of them are targeting obtaining or benefiting from technologies, including necessary technologies to communicate and to access to information and medical softwares.

It can be mentioned, herein, the role of ucms in impeding the implementation of partnerships and international cooperation programs in the medical and scientific fields.

- Humanitarian exemptions claimed by countries of origin to be a mean to address humanitarian concerns related to ucms have not produced any practical or actual impacts in excluding medicine and medical equipment. This fact is clear in the context of the pandemic as well as before.

3. Politicization and decline of multilateral cooperation have weakened the fundamental role of the United Nations system and other international organizations in coordinating the global efforts to prevent and contain the pandemic, and in providing support to countries in a depoliticised manner, free from imposing donors' conditions on international cooperation and assistance programs.

- One of the manifestations of this weakness appears through the incapability of presenting a comprehensive analysis to the challenges faced by different countries, and proposing appropriate solutions to address them. The stances of some organizations are still disappointing, mainly as a result of donors' pressures, so they shun performing their tasks, refraining from exercising influence to overcome challenges and coordinate solutions. This role supposed to be the corner stone in guiding the international efforts towards overcoming global risks.

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

- revitalization of international cooperation is the key to contain the virus, tracking its mutated strains, and address its social and economic repercussions, in a way that guarantees the right to health for everyone, and paves the way for the recovery. This can be achieved through:

1. Lifting unilateral coercive measures to enable targeted countries to effectively respond to the pandemic. Humanitarian goods such as medicines, antivirals, medical equipment and their spare parts should not be a target to any direct or indirect aspects ucms.

2. Supporting the exchange of scientific information and knowledge to enhance recovery capacity.

3. Promoting international cooperation in scientific fields, using the digital technologies for the benefit of all humankind to the end of achieving further development, manufacturing and distribution of diagnostic tools, antiviral drugs, personal protective equipment and vaccines.

4. Enhancing training programs for medical and health personnel to reinforce the health sectors with qualified personnel.

5. Increasing financial allocations for research in the field of vaccines and medicines, separating the cost of new research and development from the prices of medicines, vaccines and diagnostic methods to ensure easy access, affordability and availability. Supporting fair

and non-discriminatory access to vaccine for all, considering it as a public good out of the restrictions on intellectual properties.

6. Providing access to information at the international level and making the necessary technologies available to all countries, including technologies needed to follow up medical developments, as well as technologies that can be used to address the human rights implications of the pandemic, such as those used for remote education.

7. Implementing international cooperation in full compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter with full respect of the sovereignty of states, and in line with their national priorities.

8. Depoliticizing the delivery of humanitarian aid aimed at combating the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

1. The idea of drafting and adopting a new treaty for this purpose requires an assessment of the efficiency of the existing frameworks on international cooperation, to determine whether the deficiency is due to practical reality, i.e. the extent of implementation of these frameworks, or to actual failure of the existing frameworks to cover substantial challenges related to pandemic situations.

2. Any draft treaty, or new legal instrument, aiming to achieve preparedness and response to pandemics globally must be as a result of an open, public and comprehensive consultations that take into account the concerns of all states, reflecting the challenges, and providing solutions in this regard, in consistent with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.
