



From global principles to national action

Implementation challenges of the future pandemic accord



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During the World Health Summit in Berlin on October 16, 2023, Sanofi hosted a roundtable on the national challenges and needs for the implementation of the future pandemic accord. This note captures the insights from an eclectic and highly knowledgeable set of stakeholders including international and regional organizations, national governments and parliaments, the private sector, academics, and civil society organizations.

“It is not a matter of if, but when the next pandemic will hit”

In 2022, the UN Member States embarked on a journey to negotiate and adopt a pandemic accord by May 2024 to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPPR). Member States agreed that an implementable and effective accord should address three key needs: access to pandemic countermeasures through regional self-sufficiency and ownership, sustainable financing mechanisms and incentives for countries, and accountability to independently monitor the accord's proper implementation at

national level. Many of these mechanisms were either missing or inadequate during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was particularly true for lower-income countries, who were hit hardest by the pandemic, with criticism that the world failed to take the necessary equitable approach. The future pandemic accord provides an unprecedented opportunity to take stock of the lessons from COVID-19 and ensure that the world is better prepared for the next pandemic.

“Today's policymakers and stakeholders must decide whether they want to be remembered as those who did nothing to prepare for future pandemics or as those who prevented them”

Implementation requires multiple stakeholders

Conditional to its adoption, the accord will need to be ratified and integrated within national legislative frameworks. Parliamentarians will play an important role in ensuring their governments are held accountable and implement the final accord. Ratification requires policymakers to understand the real-world implications of the accord's text and see that it is implemented. Therefore, it is crucial that they are included in national delegations and negotiating teams, enabling them to have a front row seat in the negotiations and better preparing them for implementation and ensuring accountability at national level.

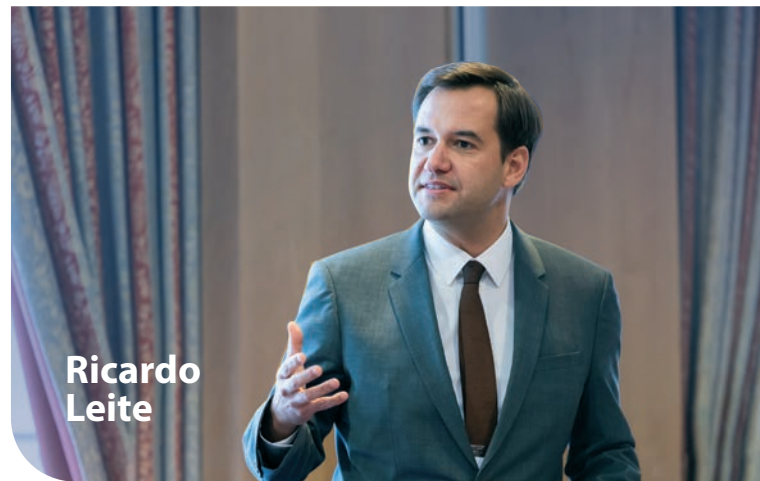
The multifaceted nature of pandemics means that it is essential to ensure relevant stakeholders and government agencies are aligned.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of heeding voices grounded in science, from research, academia, industry, civil society, regional and international organizations. These experts can inform what will, and will not work, and provide new ideas that can shape our response to pandemics. It is critical to create the conditions for scientists, academics, and researchers to contribute meaningfully to the international community's efforts towards preparedness and response for future pandemics. Pathways for scientists' participation and involvement in the decision-making needs to be made explicit, otherwise we stand a very real risk of reaching an unworkable accord.

Engaging the pharmaceutical industry in the negotiation and implementation of the pandemic accord is crucial for future pandemic response, as

it will be developing, manufacturing and supplying vaccines, treatments, and other medical countermeasures. Mindful of closing equity gaps, the industry has committed to reserve an allocation of real-time production of vaccines and treatments for vulnerable populations in lower-income settings through the Industry [Berlin Declaration](#).

When it comes to stakeholder roles, civil society plays an essential part in adapting the ideas provided by academics and industry into the real world. Setting targets and monitoring indicators is another important element towards successful implementation of the accord. The wider stakeholder community has a key role to play here in ensuring consensus over those targets. Such proactive stakeholder involvement should lead to realistic targets and indicators that are widely accepted, and a plan on how they can be achieved within agreed timeframes.



Ricardo Leite

Recommendation

Bringing together actors from different backgrounds, our discussion highlighted how every stakeholder has a role to play in preventing future pandemics. Indeed, while Parliaments must ratify the accord, the full spectrum of stakeholders must be involved in supporting implementation efforts. Uniting their specific expertise academia, industry, civil society, international and regional organizations will all play a role in ensuring effective global preparedness and response to the next pandemic, if the accord is adopted.

Governments are not monolithic organizations

Before formal negotiations at the WHO-led [Inter-governmental Negotiating Body \(INB\)](#) meetings, the lead negotiating team at the French Ministry of European and International Affairs coordinates with other Departments (Health, Employment, Education, Research, Finance, and Agriculture) and consults with industry through a formalized process to reach a national position. While this is good practice, the same opportunity may not be afforded to all governments where staffing INB meetings is a real challenge.

“It’s all a matter of trust”



The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that all politics is local. Communities matter; and involving local stakeholders is as important as those at international levels.

Trust should be built not only among stakeholders, but also towards them: if scientists, industry, and civil society feel heard and understood, they will be more willing to support governments in implementing the accord. Without their support, implementation – and the accord as a whole – will be impossible to achieve. And without implementation, an international agreement holds no value.

Very few people outside of “global health” circles are aware of the pandemic accord’s developments and what is at stake. This is a missed opportunity,

given the value these stakeholders can bring to the table. Communication should not be underestimated: we cannot afford to suffer the same fate of misinformation and disinformation as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation

The inclusion of a diverse group of stakeholders, together with continuous dialogue and the appropriate experts in communication allows for an environment that not only combats negative actors, but also creates trust and transparency.

Overcoming national fiscal challenges

Prevention, preparedness and response - this three-step approach that all countries must undertake requires significant resources. However, not all Member States will have the capability nor the capacity to fully support all three independently, such as in the case of surveillance, R&D or local manufacturing. This is where regional bodies like the European Commission (EC), the

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU) can play a role.

By speaking with one voice, regional blocs can have more weight in the ongoing negotiations, ensuring that sustainable financing mechanisms are in place to support pandemic prevention, preparedness and response as well as to address countries’ needs and priorities.

“If we don’t discuss within regions, this will be a failure because the text will be lower in its ambition”

Consultations with the private sector must not be limited to the biopharmaceutical sector; expertise from others like banking and insurance are critical to ensure pragmatic solutions to sustainable financing. To achieve Universal Healthcare Coverage (UHC), significant, responsible and sustainable investment is required to strengthen workforce and health systems.

Parliamentarians can also play a role in ensuring adequate financial resources are available for

prevention, preparedness and response to pandemics. As budget approvers, Parliamentarians can influence the funding available not only for health preparedness investment within their countries, but also abroad in the form of international aid and support. But to do so, they need to be aware and involved of the discussions in such international fora, hence reinforcing the need to bring together multiple different stakeholders.

“In the richest countries of the world, we have disease-driven systems – a broken model that is being exported to the developing world. We need to design systems that focus on wellbeing and quality of life for all”

The same applies to investment in infrastructure: these should not be done in isolation. For example, as part of the [WHO Global Action Plan \(GAP\) on Influenza Vaccines](#), to increase global production capacity given pandemic potential, sixteen manufacturing plants were established in lower-income countries. However, only two of them remain operational today. In addition, whilst [COVAX](#) (the vaccines arm of the [Access to Covid Tools Accelerator](#), ACT-A) made significant contributions, its creation during the COVID-19 pandemic limited its ability to really make an impact where the need was greatest. These past episodes underscore the need to understand what is sustainable to prevent, prepare and respond to the next pandemic.

Recommendation

Regional organizations can have greater impact on the implementation of the accord. Involving them in the implementation process would help overcome national fiscal and economic challenges, share resources, and enhance global preparedness. Furthermore, long-term financing mechanisms are required to promote health systems that prioritize wellbeing, moving away from counterproductive disease-driven models.

The way forward

Politicians, scientists, industry, civil society and regional organizations can all contribute to the journey the international community has embarked on to prepare and prevent future pandemics. It is critical that actors from different backgrounds have a seat at the negotiating and decision-making table. Effective communication, awareness and education are useful tools to build trust among stakeholders, citizens, and regions. If everybody has a seat at the table, there will be more incentives to share resources and contribute to addressing national challenges. The ongoing

discussions at the INB are not just about signing an accord: they are about keeping a high level of ambition and solidarity to support countries in need to improve their capacities in a pragmatic and sustainable manner.

Implementation will inevitably have multiple speeds, and a “coalition of the willing” among the signatories must be able to press ahead to give the accord effect. We have the tools to make our futures healthier and more sustainable.

“Let’s make sure we prepare for, and prevent the next pandemic, rather than fight over the last one”

Annex

This closed-door roundtable was organized by Sanofi and was held on the sidelines of the World Health Summit. We would like to thank the World Health Summit and its President Dr Axel Pries for hosting the roundtable and Dr Ricardo Baptista Leite for his keynote and continuous support through the UNITE network. The session was moderated by Mr. Nikos Manaras, Partner at Acumen Public Affairs.



Participating organizations and entities

Academia, think tanks and research organizations

- Milken Institute
- National University of Singapore
- Pace University
- Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

Civil society

- Asia-Europe Foundation
- Pandemic Action Network
- Population Services International (PSI)
- Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM)

International and regional organizations

- Africa Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)
- Gavi
- Global Health Security Fund (GHS Fund)
- UNAIDS
- Wellcome Trust
- WHO/Europe
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- World Health Summit

National and local institutions

- Ambassade de France en Allemagne (French Embassy in Germany)

- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ - German Society for International Cooperation)
- Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères (French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs)
- Ministère des Solidarités et de la Santé (French Ministry of Solidarity and Health)
- Nairobi City County, Kenya
- New South Wales Ministry of Health, Australia (NSW Health)
- Norwegian Institute of Public Health (NIPH)
- United States Chamber of Commerce
- Zentrum für Pandemie-Impfstoffe und -Therapeutika (ZEPAI - Center for Pandemic Vaccines and Therapeutics)

Other organizations

- HEALTH.AI – The Global Agency for Responsible AI in Health
- UNITE – Parliamentarians Network for Global Health

Private sector

- International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)
- Sanofi
- Verband Forschender Pharma-Unternehmen (vfa - Association of Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies)