

## **Closing remarks by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, at the Special Session of the World Health Assembly**

*Wednesday, 1 December 2021*

Your Excellency Professor Hounkpatin,

Your Excellency Dr Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari,

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, dear colleagues and friends,

Let me begin by thanking Professor Hounkpatin and Dr Al Kuwari for their leadership of this historic Special Session. Merci beaucoup; shukran jazeelan.

I also thank all colleagues here at headquarters who have worked incredibly hard for months to organise this meeting, and to make it as successful and safe as possible.

But most of all, I thank you, our Member States.

After all, this is your WHO.

I thank you for the overwhelming support expressed by Member States for the need for a new accord on pandemic preparedness and response.

I welcome the decision you have adopted today, to establish an intergovernmental negotiating body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, with a view to adoption under Article 19, or under other provisions of the WHO Constitution as may be deemed appropriate by the intergovernmental negotiating body.

I welcome your commitment to an inclusive, transparent and efficient process, led by Member States and based on consensus.

I welcome your commitment to hold the first meeting of the INB no later than the first of March 2022, and to submit its outcome for consideration to the World Health Assembly in 2024.

And I give you my commitment that the Secretariat will support this process.

The adoption of this decision is cause for celebration, and cause for hope, which we will need.

Of course, there is still a long road ahead. There are still differences of opinion about what a new accord could or should contain.

But you have proven to each other and the world that differences can be overcome, and common ground can be found.

As many Member States have said, the International Health Regulations remain an essential governance tool for the prevention, preparedness, detection and response to public health emergencies.

We continue to urge all Member States to implement and abide by the provisions of the IHR.

At the same time, the pandemic has exposed shortcomings in the application and implementation of the IHR that I believe are best addressed with a convention, agreement or other international instrument.

And as we work together to strengthen the architecture of global health security, I urge all Member States to confront the inescapable truth that we cannot do that without strengthening WHO.

In two weeks' time, the Working Group on Sustainable Financing will reconvene, as it prepares to deliver its final report to the Executive Board and next year's World Health Assembly.

The report includes recommendations that will improve WHO's effectiveness, financial governance and impact.

As Chancellor Merkel outlined in her remarks on Monday, increasing assessed contributions to 50% of the base programme budget will be a game changer.

I urge all Member States to support the proposals of the working group's draft report.

Even as we look to the future, we must remain focused on the present.

I have one simple request for all Member States, and that is: end this pandemic.

As we mark World AIDS Day, we are reminded that more than 40 years into the global AIDS epidemic, we still have no vaccine and no cure for this disease.

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, we have not one but many vaccines, and many other effective tools.

Just in the past week, this virus has demonstrated that it will not simply disappear.

How many more lives and livelihoods it takes is up to us.

Ending the pandemic is not a matter of chance; it's a matter of choice.

I call on all Member States to choose to achieve our targets of vaccinating 40% of the population of every country by the end of this year, and 70% by the middle of next year.

I call on those countries that have already reached 70% to choose to swap your vaccine delivery schedules with COVAX and AVAT, as Switzerland has just done;

I call on all Member States to choose to remove every barrier to scaling up vaccine production, by sharing technology and know-how, and by supporting a waiver of intellectual property rights.

I call on those countries that have promised to donate vaccines to choose to make good on those promises, as urgently as possible.

I call on Member States to choose to fully fund the ACT Accelerator, which needs 23.4 billion U.S. dollars over the next 12 months to get tests, treatments and vaccines to where they are needed most.

I call on every Member State to choose a comprehensive, tailored, layered combination of proven public health and social measures to reduce transmission, reduce the pressure on your health systems, and save lives.

I call on all Member States to focus on strengthening and optimizing clinical pathways, from primary to intensive care, ensuring the right patient get the right care at the right time, and that health workers are supported and protected while doing their life-saving work.

I call on all Member States to intensify and target risk communication, strengthen community engagement, empowerment and support, addressing community concerns, combatting misinformation and building trust.

I call on every Member State to choose to increase surveillance, testing, sequencing and reporting, and to refrain from penalizing countries that do, in compliance with the International Health Regulations.

And I call on all Member States to choose to commit to strengthening your WHO, especially by supporting the proposals of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing.

We are one humanity.

We have one planet.

We have one health.

And we have one WHO. Your WHO.

I know you're committed to strengthening it, to have better preparedness for the future.

Thank you so much. I thank you.