

Joint newsletter of the INB and WGIHR Bureaux (#1/2023)

July 2023

A. The INB

Foreword

Notable progress has been made since May 2023 by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (the INB). The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly in May 2023 played an important role in maintaining the momentum towards our objective to deliver a pandemic accord to the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2024. Shortly after, on 12-16 June 2023, the INB Bureau continued its work during the resumed session of the fifth meeting of the INB (INB5 resumed session). The INB considered the Bureau's text and agreed on innovative ways of working, empowering interested Member States to facilitate informal discussions. We are grateful for the leadership of the WHO Member States that have volunteered to help to bridge the gaps on key issues. Their hard work during the intersessional period will pay off. Once again, our diversity will make us stronger.

How the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body works – the informals

As a Bureau, we were tasked by WHO Member States with proposing a way forward to map out the key steps until May 2024, when the INB is due to deliver its outcome of its work to develop a pandemic accord for consideration to the WHA. As agreed by Member States, the INB followed this roadmap for nearly a year with great progress. As the INB engages in negotiations, we collectively feel that there are further opportunities to drive consensus on key issues. The same key issues that the world stumbled into during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as equity, financing, solidarity and cooperation. To overcome this, WHO Member States need to continue to deepen understanding of each other's perspectives, hear from experts, and work closely to build the way forward organically. Different groups of interests are emerging among Member States, such as the Group FOR Equity, and we count on these very important informal groups to play a key role in building consensus and bridging gaps. We welcome the additional time invested by many Member States through the informal meetings, which will help us accelerate our work and deliver an outcome in May 2024 as mandated by the World Health Assembly.

"It is hard to let your child go and grow up, but we have reached the time for the first night out at a friend's. We know that we have a great village to raise this child together". Precious Matsoso, Co-Chair of the INB.

"We are conducting a new way of working, which was rolled out following the INB5 Resumed Session and ahead of the Sixth Meeting of the INB (INB6) to be held on 17-21 July, with the goal to informally bridge gaps to seek convergences in specific areas. Presentations by different Member States on how they see the issues help us understand each other better. Our aims may be the same but the means we use to reach them are different. We remain confident that we can and must deliver in a timely manner, and we need to keep an open mind regarding the best tactics to reach success." Roland Drieco, Co-Chair of the INB.

Status of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body process:

What we have accomplished in May-July 2023



Following the [fourth meeting of the INB \(INB4\)](#) and the [fifth meeting of the INB \(INB5\)](#), it was agreed that the Bureau would present a compilation of all textual proposals shared by Member States, and propose a Bureau's text at the [Resumed Session of the INB5](#), which was held on 12-16 June 2023.

A preparatory briefing was held on 5 June 2023, which was open to relevant stakeholders. The resumed session of INB5 included a plenary that allowed all stakeholders to share their views. The Drafting Group exchanged views on selected articles of the [Bureau's text](#), and agreed to continue consideration of several articles through informal meetings of the Drafting Group. As a pilot, informal meetings on Article 9 (Research and development) of the Bureau's text were held twice on the sidelines of the Drafting Group meeting. This allowed the INB to gain a collective understanding of the variety of views expressed by Member States about each topic.

The INB agreed to a series of intersessional informal meetings for Drafting Group participants in advance of the sixth meeting of the INB (INB6), which are open to all Member States.

What the intersessional informal meetings are working towards



Informal meetings scheduled up until INB6 have focused on: Article 9 (Research and development) co-facilitated by Norway and Mexico, Article 12 (Access and benefit-sharing) co-facilitated by Indonesia and Pakistan, and Article 13 (Supply chain and logistics) co-facilitated by Australia and Ethiopia.

The Member States that have generously volunteered their support to the INB Bureau to co-facilitate discussions will report back to the INB6 on progress and achievements, including suggestions to be considered formally by the INB6. The INB Bureau warmly welcomes this initiative, which has the potential to generate increased ownership and buy-in while helping to define common ground for possible solutions on specific issues.

The WHO Secretariat has also supported the informals, including by making WHO experts available as needed to respond to legal, governance and technical questions.

Our next steps

During [INB6](#), to be held from 17–21 July 2023, the Drafting Group will be invited to continue their work to consider the Bureau's text, starting with the remaining articles of Chapter II and thereafter Chapters III and I. The INB will also discuss next steps.

B. The WGIHR

About the Bureau of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (WGIHR)



The Bureau of the WGIHR was elected during its [first meeting in November 2022](#). From left to right, it is composed of Mr Colin McIlff of the United States of America; Ambassador Grata Endah Werdaningtyas of Indonesia; Dr Abdullah Asiri of Saudi Arabia and Dr Ashley Bloomfield of New Zealand as Co-Chairs; Ambassador François Rivasseau of France, and Dr Sultani Matendehero of Kenya.

Foreword

We are delighted to share information with you about progress to date with the WGIHR process. The WGIHR has a unique opportunity to consider targeted amendments to the IHR to better prevent, prepare for and respond to the next pandemic. We are fully committed to transparency and inclusivity and are pleased to share this newsletter with the INB Bureau in light of the areas of common interest for our respective work and our commitment to close collaboration for collective success.

Why Member States decided to set up the WGIHR

Member States of the WHO agreed to embark on a process to consider targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR), through [Executive Board Decision 150\(3\) \(2022\)](#) and [World Health Assembly Decision WHA75\(9\) \(2022\)](#). The process builds on lessons learned from the various review panels that examined the functioning of the IHR and the global health security architecture during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is being led by the WHO Member States through the WGIHR.

The WGIHR is considering more than [300 proposed amendments](#) to 33 of the 66 articles of the IHR and 5 of its 9 annexes, plus 6 new articles and 2 new annexes. This is a significant scope of work.

Taking into consideration the report of the [Review Committee regarding amendments to the International Health Regulations \(2005\)](#), the WGIHR will propose a package of targeted amendments for consideration by the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in May 2024.

How the WGIHR works – key principles and methodology

The WGIHR was established by revising the mandate and the name of the Working Group on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies (WGPR) to work exclusively on consideration of proposed targeted amendments to the IHR¹.

¹ Consistent with decision [WHA75\(9\)](#) (2022) and decision [EB150\(3\)](#) (2022).

The WGIHR operates as a subdivision of the Health Assembly, in accordance with Rule 41 of the [Rules of Procedure of the World Health Assembly](#). The WGIHR is open to all WHO Member States and Associate Members, as well as regional economic integration organizations, as appropriate, and is working in an inclusive manner, conducting its business on the basis of consensus. The WGIHR is committed to transparency and inclusivity, and as such, the WGIHR holds as part of each of its meetings plenary sessions that are open to relevant stakeholders and webcast.

Key principles of the work of the WGIHR include flexible and innovative ways of working. The WGIHR allows the formation of subgroups and intersessional informal briefings on specific technical issues, as needed, between formal meetings of the WGIHR to help prepare the ground for the next meeting and accelerate progress. Drafting sessions (to discuss and agree on the specific wording of amendments to the IHR (2005)) are reserved for Member States and a limited number of stakeholders, as agreed by the [WGIHR](#)².

Status of the WGIHR process

Initiating the work

During the [first meeting of the WGIHR \(WGIHR1\)](#) on 14–15 November 2022, the WGIHR addressed [essential organizational and procedural matters](#) such as the composition of the Bureau, which is the coordinating entity of the WGIHR and comprises one Officer from each of the six WHO regions, and how the Bureau would support the process.



During the [second meeting of the WGIHR \(WGIHR2\)](#), held from 20–24 February 2023, the WGIHR agreed on a [timeline](#), detailed [modalities of engagement for stakeholders](#), and [modalities for consideration of proposed amendments to the IHR \(2005\)](#).

Implementing and finetuning the approach

Thanks to solid progress achieved during WGIHR1 and at the beginning of WGIHR2, the WGIHR began its concrete work of going through the [proposed amendments to the IHR \(2005\)](#), including Article 2 “Purpose and scope” and Article 3 “Principles”, as well as Articles 4–56 and the Annexes. Relevant stakeholders were invited to share their views during the first reading of the proposed amendments .

To help facilitate the review process, the WGIHR agreed on a number of steps, including:

- requesting a reference document that reflects the proposed amendments to the IHR (2005) and the corresponding [technical recommendations made by the Review Committee regarding Amendments to the IHR \(2005\)](#);
- agreeing to group related proposed amendments (by article and across articles covering similar topics) in clusters and consider them sequentially by groups during the next meeting, with some flexibility (Annex 1 of the [WGIHR2 meeting report](#)); and

² Associate Members; regional economic integration organizations; the Holy See and Liechtenstein in their capacity as States Parties to the IHR that are not Member States of WHO; and the Observer Delegation of Palestine.

- empowering Member States to facilitate informal consultations to consolidate and align some proposed amendments before the next meeting to help build consensus on these amendments. The outcome of the consultations do not have the status of an agreed text.

Two WGIHR intersessional meetings were held on 27 March and 17 April 2023 on compliance and implementation. Representatives of the Africa Group, Member States of the EU, USA, and Malaysia, that ARE proponents of the 3 new Articles 53A, 53bis-quart, and 54A worked towards consolidating and aligning their respective proposals.



The [third meeting of the WGIHR \(WGIHR3\)](#) was held from 17–20 April 2023. During this meeting, Member States proceeded with a discussion on proposed amendments related to topics including: compliance and implementation; public health response and core capacities; and collaboration and assistance. Additional informal consultations were also held on the sidelines of the drafting session to further consider the newly proposed Articles 53A, 53

bis-quarter, and 54 bis, as well as amendments proposed to Article 54.

From WGIHR3 to WGIHR4 & 5: intensifying the intersessional preparations for success

As noted in the [report of WGIHR3](#), the WGIHR agreed to extend the flexible and innovative intersessional arrangements piloted after WGIHR2, in the light of the good results achieved, in preparation for the [fourth meeting of the Working Group \(WGIHR4\)](#) to be held on 24-28 July 2023, including:



–Encouraging discussions among Member States that are proponents of various proposed amendments, with a view to presenting any outcomes for consideration of the drafting group at WGIHR4; and

– Organizing facilitated informal consultations open to all drafting group members covering Articles and Annexes discussed during WGIHR3. The outcomes of the WGIHR-facilitated informal consultations do not constitute agreed text, and will be translated and made available in advance of the fourth meeting of the

WGIHR (WGIHR4) to be held on 24-28 July 2023;

The facilitated informal consultations include:

- An informal consultation to discuss the combined text of the African Group and Bangladesh (related article: 13 A) led by the African Group and Bangladesh on 30 June.
- An informal consultation and briefing on current technical support, capacity building and collaborative activities undertaken, with technical input, to help refine the package of proposed amendments in this article, led by Saudi Arabia on 3 July. The purpose was to include a mapping of technical assistance and financial support provided by WHO in newly proposed areas – (related to Articles 44, AAA, and Annexes 1 and 10).

– Organizing information briefings on specific topics, open to all drafting group members and relevant stakeholders, including:

- the Pandemic fund and other financial mechanisms (related article: 44A), held on 23 June.
- the notification and verification system – how it functions, with potential input from National IHR Focal Points (related articles: 5-11) and how Emergency Committees are convened and how PHEIC is determined (related articles: 12, 48, 49, 15-18), held on 29 June.

– Continuing discussions of the proposed IHR amendments according to relevant groupings/clusters at the fourth and fifth WGIHR meetings, while noting that flexibility should continue to apply (see [Annex 2 of the meeting report](#)).

The WGIHR Bureau welcomes the commitment of WHO Member States to conduct an ambitious intersessional agenda. We firmly believe that it will help to pave the way for tangible progress during the upcoming meetings of the [WGIHR4 \(24-28 July 2023\)](#) and WGIHR5 (2-6 October 2023).

C. Topics of common interest for both the INB and the WGIHR

Strengthening Coordination between the INB and the WGIHR

Mindful of the mandates of the INB and the WGIHR to coordinate their work, the Bureaux of the INB and the WGIHR continue to hold regular [joint meetings](#).

During INB5 and WGIHR3, Member States agreed to hold a joint plenary meeting of the two bodies after the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly.

In preparation for the joint plenary, a joint INB and WGIHR briefing was held on 5 June 2023, which canvassed feedback from Member States on the approach to discussions, expected outcomes and priorities for discussion at the joint plenary meeting. In addition, input was collected on the list of topics of common interest to the INB and WGIHR, which was put together by the two Bureaux in order to assist the two processes with their respective work.

The joint INB and WGIHR plenary meeting will be held immediately following INB6, and immediately prior to WGIHR4, on Friday 21 July, 14:00 – 17:00 and Monday 24 July, 09:30 – 12:30.

The joint plenary meeting is expected to allow discussions on the relationship between the INB and IHR processes and instruments, in particular their respective objectives and, key definitions in relation to a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) and pandemic. In addition, Member States will be invited to provide views on how to address topics of common interest towards coherence and complementarity between the two instruments. This meeting is expected to help Member States conduct their work in the context of the INB and the WGIHR respectively.

The two Bureaux would like to reiterate their joint commitment to the success of the two processes, which can be considered as a `continuum` of activities contributing to the same goal of stronger collective pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

[Deepening Coordination with the UNGA High-level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response \(HLM on PPPR\)](#)

The Co-Facilitators leading the intergovernmental consultations on the Political Declaration of the HLM on PPPR³ released a [roadmap](#) in relation to the circulation of the Zero Draft to UN Member States. The draft zero of the Political Declaration was presented to Member States on 7 June 2023. The draft was based on extensive consultations, both in New York and in Geneva, with Member States, UN entities and other stakeholders, including civil society, in particular the Multi-stakeholder hearing in New York on 9 May. Four readings are taking place through June-July 2023, and negotiations will continue until the end of July 2023, before adoption on 20 September 2023 during the UNGA High Level Meeting. The WHO Office at the UN is supporting the Co-Facilitators and Member States throughout the process, in close coordination with WHO Headquarters. Stakeholder registration for the HLM closed on 19 June, and further details of the HLM will be shared by the Office of the General Assembly President. Preliminary information can be found on the [page dedicated to the HLM](#) on the WHO website.

[Ongoing information sharing and gathering by INB and WGIHR Bureaux members](#)

Members of both Bureaux are actively sharing information with and gathering input from their WHO Regions and beyond. Recent activities have included:

- During the Seventy-sixth WHA, the INB reported back on its work to date. Some of the key issues under consideration at the INB and the WGIHR were addressed and a number of events allowed further engagement with relevant stakeholders. The Co-Chairs of the INB and the WGIHR took active part in a [Strategic Roundtable](#) entitled “The World Together: Member State-led processes to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response”, and [side events](#), including “Synergies and Sensemaking from Pandemics – A Comparative Analysis of the Proposed IHR Amendments and the INB CA+ text” organized South Africa, Wits University and UNAIDS, inter alia, and participating in social media live activities.
- INB and WGIHR Bureau members have also joined forces to author joint press briefings and writing commentaries in their respective regions: for example, in [South-East Asia](#).

³ H.E. Omar Ilale, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations, and H.E. Gilar Erdan, Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations.

What is the plan of upcoming events?

INB and the WGIHR timeline, as indicated in document [A/INB/5/3⁴](#) and document [A/WGIHR/2/4 Rev.1](#).

Date	Meeting	Deliverables
17-21 July 2023	<u>Sixth meeting of the INB</u> and Drafting Group meetings	– Review of the work of the drafting group – Progress towards a consensus text of the WHO CA+
24–28 July 2023	<u>Fourth meeting of the WGIHR</u>	
28 August–1 September 2023	Regional Committee for Africa	
11–15 September 2023	Regional Committee for South-East Asia	
25–29 September 2023	Regional Committee for the Americas	
4-6 September 2023	Additional INB session and/or Drafting Group meetings	Progress towards a consensus text of the WHO CA+
2–6 October 2023	Fifth meeting of the WGIHR	
9–12 October 2023	Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean	
16–20 October 2023	Regional Committee for the Western Pacific	
24–26 October 2023	Regional Committee for Europe	
6-10 November 2023	Continuation of drafting group	Progress towards a consensus text of the WHO CA+
4-6 December 2023	Seventh meeting of the INB	– Progress towards a consensus text of the WHO CA+ – Outline of the final report for the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly
7-8 December 2023	Sixth meeting of the WGIHR	

⁴ The schedule of [upcoming INB meetings](#) was agreed by the INB at its third meeting, on 5-7 December 2022

19 February-1 March 2024	Eighth meeting of the INB and drafting group	– Progress towards a consensus text of the WHO CA+ – Preparation of the final report for the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly
8–29 March 2024	Ninth meeting of the INB and drafting group	– Consensus text of the WHO CA+ – Finalization of the report for the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly
May 2024	Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly	

How can stakeholders be engaged in the future?

The INB and WGIHR Bureaus are working to organize more regular informational briefing sessions open to all the stakeholders of the INB and the WGIHR, including Member States and relevant stakeholders. Therefore, please stay tuned and watch out for more invitations to contribute.

Additionally, you may want to check regularly the following key resources:

- [WHO | Intergovernmental Negotiating Body](#)
- [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body \(INB\) \(who.int\)](#)
- Questions and Answers about the [Pandemic prevention, preparedness and response accord \(who.int\)](#)
- [Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations \(2005\) \(who.int\)](#)
- [WHO | Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations \(2005\)](#)
- [Q&A: International Health Regulations: amendments \(who.int\)](#)
- [Webpage of the High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response](#)

Next newsletter:

We plan on issuing the next Newsletter in September 2023, and we look forward to sharing our progress with you.