

Dear

We respectfully raise the critical issue of the proposed International Treaty on Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness^[1] currently under negotiation by the Government and other member states of the World Health Organization (WHO). We call on you to oppose this treaty by raising this issue *in Parliament*, demanding debate and open review, in the interests of preserving national sovereignty and individual rights.

This proposed treaty seeks to impose WHO dictates in place of national sovereignty and the rights of an individual to make choices regarding their own body and health, and is demonstrably inappropriate and disproportionate from a public health viewpoint.

Basic principles governing public health

The breadth of factors impacting an individual's health, and the importance of personal, community and national control over health, are reflected in principles previously accepted by the World Health Organization:

Definition of health: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. (Constitution of the WHO, 1946)^[2]

Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people. (Constitution of the WHO, 1946)^[2]

The people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care. (Article IV, Declaration of Alma Ata, 1978)^[3]

The UN Declaration of Human Rights^[4], 1948, also supports the fundamental rights of the individual: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*

Public health priority of pandemics

Pandemics severely affecting a high proportion of younger and middle-aged people have not occurred since the pre-antibiotic era (1918-20), when a majority of deaths were considered to be due to secondary bacterial^[5] infections. The WHO lists only four pandemics^[6] in the 120 years prior to Covid-19; 1918-19, 1957-58, 1968-69, and 2009-10, with only 1918-19 causing more than 1.1 million deaths. Severe pandemics are rare events. The Covid-19 pandemic, whilst resulting in considerable disruption and collateral harm, resulted in mortality at an average age^[7] similar to that of all-cause mortality, with severity concentrated within clearly identifiable population groups^[8].

The diversion of resources and various mitigation measures used mostly unsuccessfully during the Covid-19 public health response are demonstrated to have had a considerable negative impact on the economy and healthcare access. This underlines the importance of local control

and prioritisation in time of disease outbreaks to ensure long-term harms do not outweigh intended short-term benefit.

Proposed treaty

A special session of the World Health Assembly from 29 November - 1 December 2021^[9] commenced a consultation process with the WHO member states that aims to develop, for the first time, a binding International Treaty on Pandemic Prevention and Preparedness that could override and subvert national sovereignty and decision-making on responses to disease outbreaks that the WHO classifies as 'pandemics'. This could provide WHO staff the power to override democratic norms in countries and supersede community consultation processes, and govern the right to work, to travel, to pursue an education, and to interact with family and community and undertake religious observance, income, trade, and other basic human rights previously supported in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under national and common law.

The definition of 'pandemic' used by the WHO is arbitrary^[10], leaving the decision to subvert national sovereignty potentially at the whim of individual interpretation.

The importance of local and national sovereignty

The WHO was set up after World War II as a body to serve countries, governed by them, and not as a body that would govern the actions of member states. Our laws and process of governance have developed over centuries to protect the rights of individuals and to preserve national sovereignty at the will of the people. It is imperative that those setting policy and rules on complex issues have a direct stake in the outcomes.

We therefore request that steps be taken urgently to review the sovereignty and health issues that are at risk through the process currently under way, and to ensure that the role of the WHO, and other international organisations, remains strictly advisory and technical, whilst all decisions affecting citizens remain within the ambit of local and national government as well as the individuals themselves.

Sincerely,