



Friday, 21 January 2022, 15.00-16.30 CET

Online public briefing and debate

The pandemic treaty and the right to development: Learning from COVID-19 lessons

In a historic special session of the World Health Assembly, the international community has unanimously decided to embark into negotiations for a new pandemic convention or other binding instrument, with the aim to better prepare and respond to future pandemic events. A certain enthusiasm has been triggered in global health circles by the novelty of this diplomatic route. The negotiating wind now has gained worldwide strength, but what sense of direction it will actually take does not yet seem to be very clear, due to a combination of missing evidence and thematic complexity. The World Health Assembly Special Session has indicated different possible routes, not necessarily converging.

While it may be too early to assess the outcome of the WHO pandemic treaty negotiations, in the third year of COVID-19 the international community should clearly recognize the new political categories that COVID-19 has imposed on the global health agenda and the urgency to address the pandemic preparedness and response in terms of the two intertwined challenges of social inequality and climate crisis. A new development paradigm is needed for the world and the right to health is not only a key driver of human life and dignity, but it is also indispensable for the exercise of all other human rights and for orienting policymaking towards the safeguard of biodiversity and respect of planetary boundaries. Because of its peculiar capacity, the right to health is recognized in multiple international instruments.

The [G2H2 report](#) (“The politics of a WHO pandemic treaty in a disenchanted world”) launched in November 2021, makes a direct connection between the right to health and the right to development. While exacerbating the world’s deep structural injustices, COVID-19 forces a new sense of purpose to policymaking in the field of public health, beyond the individual-level biological causes or risk factors and the disproportionate emphasis on technological solutions. A pandemic is not a fact of life, a natural phenomenon. It represents instead the by-product of a systemic governance failure that can and must be avoided through a considerable change of direction and the adoption of a new

development paradigm pursued through international cooperation and a new interconnected intergovernmental vision in formal diplomatic fora.

The overuse of natural resources in the past two centuries has caused global warming and is having a direct effect on the health of people and on the environment, with a detrimental result for the current generation and for generations to come, determining intergenerational inequity. More than ever, it is paramount for the international community to immunize itself from the temptation of preserving existing relations of power among nations, notwithstanding their failures, in the name of a neoliberal conception of global governance and an old notion of health security.

The main goal of this public debate is very simple. We want to illustrate and discuss the correlation between the right to health and the right to development in the context of the international commitment to prevent future pandemics and better prepare the world to tackle future infectious outbreaks like COVID-19. The discussion aims to seed new knowledge and assert a new approach about the inevitable intersection across current diplomatic routes ongoing in Geneva, which have been parallel and largely disconnected so far.

The Earth's counterattack to the universalized Western development model provides the cogent opening of a paradigmatic change. This is no time to waste the pandemic health and socio-economic crisis in reductionist solutions for the future.

Speakers (interventions of 10 minutes each)

- Armando de Negri, *PAHO, Health Systems and Health Services Division & G2H2 Steering Committee*
- Lau Kin Chi, *Global University for Sustainability, Hong Kong, China*
- Obi Aginam, *United Nations University-International Institute for Global Health (UNU-IIGH), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia*
- Shyami Puvimanasinghe, *UNHCHR, Geneva*
- Murad Akincilar, *CETIM, Geneva*

The moderation of the panel will be conducted by Nicoletta Denticio, *G2H2 co-chair & Director Global Health Justice Program, Society for International Development (SID)*.

<https://q2h2.org/posts/january2022/>