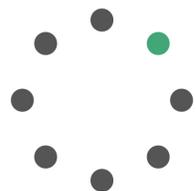




Meeting Report

Second Meeting of the Panel
20-21 October 2020



Report Summary

The second meeting (virtual) of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response was held on 20 and 21 October 2020, chaired by Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the Right Honourable Helen Clark. All panel members were in attendance.

The meeting began with a reminder that the pandemic is still raging. Panel members acknowledged the report of the first Panel meeting and the Program of Work with appreciation. It was noted the Program of Work is a living document. Panel members reiterated their commitment to engage actively in the Panel's work, drawing on their expertise and insight.

The Panel meeting considered progress on four areas of work:

1. Development of an authoritative chronology of how the pandemic unfolded;
2. Methods to understand in detail the responses to the pandemic in a selection of countries representing a broad range of response contexts;
3. Development of an international system ideally placed to deliver effective pandemic preparedness and response;
4. Consideration of the state of the World Health Organization and its response to COVID-19, including perspectives from country, regional, and global levels and from actors inside and outside WHO.

The meeting concluded by recommitting to taking a bold approach to its recommendations and being guided by rigour and inclusivity in its methods of work.

Report

Background

The Independent Panel was established by the Director-General of the World Health Organization pursuant to World Health Assembly Resolution WHA73.1. In July 2020 the Director-General requested the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Right Honourable Helen Clark, and the former President of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, to be Co-Chairs of the Panel, for which they then selected 11 panelists. The first meeting of the Panel was held on 17 September 2020, at which the Terms of Reference were received, and the Program of Work discussed. That meeting agreed that the Panel's focus would be on an analysis and vision for a strengthened international system, a review of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lessons to be learnt from previous pandemics and from the global spread and devastating impact of SARS-CoV-2.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome remarks by Co-Chairs

In her opening remarks the Rt Hon. Helen Clark noted that the pandemic continues to rage with the harsh milestone of forty million confirmed infections having been reached in the previous week, making the Panel's work all the more urgent. She noted that the Panel would begin consideration at this meeting of approaches to developing an authoritative chronology of the pandemic's emergence and responses to it. HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf drew attention to the growing toll of the pandemic on lives and livelihoods across the world and the enormous expectations of the Panel to make sense of what happened and why so as to ensure that next time the world is better prepared. She noted that when the recent meeting of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization received an update from the Co-Chairs, Member States made it clear they expected the Panel to produce impactful recommendations which would improve future pandemic responses.

Agenda Item 2: Report of the 1st Panel meeting

The report of the first meeting of the Panel held on 17 September 2020 was acknowledged. It was noted that it is published on the Panel's website at <https://theindependentpanel.org/1st-meeting-of-the-independent-panel/>.

Agenda Item 3: Revised Program of Work and planned approach to engagement

The Panel received the revised Program of Work and agreed that it should be regarded as a living document, adjusted as the work of the Panel proceeds and the pandemic evolves.

Proposed sequencing of the various elements of the Program of Work was presented by the Secretariat, including ways Panel meetings could address the different themes. Panel members expressed commitment to contributing their expertise as the work was undertaken, including engagement with working groups and symposia, and support to obtaining expert opinion from the widest possible range of stakeholders. It was noted that multiple opportunities to tap into the views of Members State would be created, both individually and on a regional basis, and that the forthcoming reporting schedule of the Panel includes a progress report to the resumed World Health Assembly in November 2020, an interim report to the WHO Executive Board in January 2021, and a report to the 74th World Health Assembly in May 2021.

In discussing the proposed methods of work and plans for engagement, Panel members noted the challenges in coming to conclusions in relation to a pandemic event which is still ongoing and may not have yet reached its peak, and also taking into account the very different responses and outcomes in different countries. Attention needs to be paid to vital issues which are still work in progress such as access to diagnostics and medicines, as well as vaccine

development and access. Some consideration was given as to whether the Panel should issue course correction recommendations. It was agreed that this possibility would be kept on the table for consideration as the Panel's work progresses.

Agenda Item 4: Defining the chronology

The Secretariat introduced the element of the Program of Work intended to establish a detailed and authoritative chronology of COVID-19 events, capturing how the epidemiology evolved, key advice and recommendations issued by WHO and other actors and the evidence on which they were based, and actions taken on this advice. A relationship will be established with the tripartite FAO/OIE/WHO group and their work on the origins of SARS-CoV-2, which includes a proposed mission to China. The Secretariat will ensure review of the earliest formal and informal publication record concerning the virus and actions reported to WHO, consult with epidemiology experts, and interview key actors. The opportunity will be afforded to Member States to submit their timelines in relation to the emergence of the pandemic.

The Panel agreed that the work on establishing an authoritative chronology of emerging information and actions taken in response to it is of great importance and is central to the Panel's mission. It was noted that this part of the Panel's work will be of great public interest and closely scrutinised, but the Panel agreed that despite the sensitivities attached, it should not be deterred in its fact-seeking efforts. The Panel agreed that close attention needs to be paid to the period immediately leading up to and closely following the first advice concerning the new virus. It was agreed that the Panel will need to collect information rigorously, and that the outcomes of this work should be made clearly accessible to the global public given the level of interest in the issue around the world.

Agenda Item 5: National and sub-national responses

The Secretariat introduced the proposed Program of Work in relation to national and sub-national responses, addressing how response strategies were defined, how they took up emerging scientific evidence, and how they adjusted as the pandemic evolved. Potential approaches to soliciting information from countries were presented, along with ways to select countries for detailed analysis so that a wide range of response types and background characteristics are represented.

The Panel discussed ways to capture the different experiences of countries in responding to the pandemic, underlining the importance of ensuring that countries were selected from across all regions and represented apparently more effective as well as apparently more challenged responses, as well as those whose experience may fall between these two poles. It was also noted that the country selection should be guided by clear and objective criteria, including potentially by measures of outcomes (for example, COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 population). It

was noted that one element in the analysis should be the extent to which countries followed their own blueprints for pandemic response. It was agreed that analysis was needed to capture the reasons why responses happened in different ways in different countries, as well as what impact challenges such as difficulties in securing access to supplies, diagnostics and therapeutics may have played. The Panel considered dimensions of trust and social safety nets were important, both as determinants of response capacity and as outcomes that should be captured in the analysis.

Summary of the day

In a summary of the day's proceedings, the Co-Chairs noted that the discussions had been very productive; that the importance of the chronology had been emphasized, together with the expectation that the Panel would be able to report clearly on the chronology. They also noted the proposed methods of work in relation to the deep dive on country responses in the Program of Work.

Agenda item 6: The international system

The Secretariat presented the proposed Program of Work on the international system noting that the Panel at its first meeting had agreed to be guided from the outset by a vision of an international system ideally placed to prepare for and respond to pandemics, and that a roundtable of invited experts had been convened on 8 October and their reflections had been reported to the Panel. Arising from these discussions, some key issues to address were; the role of the multilateral system as a whole as a pillar of pandemic preparedness and response, the role of the global financial architecture and institutions, accountability under the International Health Regulations (IHR), and widening responsibility/accountability so that it also includes community, local government, and private sectors.

The Panel noted that in considering the issue of the international system, it should not be constrained by what currently exists and therefore consider only incremental improvements, but that rather it should provide a strong articulation of what is needed to prepare for and respond to pandemics. It was therefore agreed that the vision of the international system needs be constructed as an outside view of what is necessary, starting from a zero base. That account could be organised around the questions of what the functions of the system are, what do we mean by the system, how is it financed, and the interaction of the system with the real world - including the nexus between pandemic response and impact. The Panel agreed that it was important to include actors beyond the national state in a plurilateral view of responsibility and accountability which includes civil society and the private sector, and that attention should be paid to the issue of reinforcing the global public good nature of pandemic preparedness. Potential ways of bringing together these considerations, such as through a summit to agree a charter of relevant principles, were canvassed. It was agreed that the Panel should be bold and 'think big', while ensuring that its recommendations have both relevance and impact.

Agenda item 7: World Health Organization

The Secretariat introduced the proposed Program of Work in relation to the World Health Organization, including the consideration of overarching institutional questions such as whether WHO has the right mandate for pandemic preparedness and response and the Director-General the relevant authority, whether the organization has the right structure and capacity to deliver on its mandate, and whether the financing of the organization is optimal. Potential methods for addressing these questions were suggested, including desk reviews of published literature and commentary, a survey of perceptions and expectations followed by an open webinar on the issues, and interviews with key informants inside and outside the organisation at all levels.

The Panel agreed that its consideration of WHO needs to address both what WHO should do, and what it should not do. The question of whether WHO is empowered to achieve its mandate is central. As well as addressing WHO's institutional functionality, the Panel suggested that it would also be important to address governance issues. The Panel agreed that the functioning of WHO should be addressed from a range of perspectives, including those of countries and of external actors. Many Panelists expressed the view that a close examination of whether 'less is better' is warranted. There was agreement that the consideration of WHO should range across the whole of its mandate and not just across the emergencies programme.

Summary action points

The Program of Work should guide the work of the Panel and Secretariat. It should be regarded as a living document and revisited as needed at Panel meetings. A close analysis of proposals for strengthening pandemic preparedness and response and of COVID-19 responses from other organizations, interest groups and experts should be prepared to inform Panel.

Work on establishing an authoritative chronology of how the pandemic unfolded is central to the Panel's work and is an immediate priority. The Panel should seek opportunities to maximise both expert and Member State inputs to this work, and to report on progress in relation to it at the earliest opportunity.

A broadly representative group of countries should be drawn on for a detailed consideration of national responses to the pandemic.

The Panel should develop a broad and bold vision of an international system best placed for pandemic preparedness and response, address ways of widening the range of stakeholders committed to such a system and identify clearly the means of realizing this vision.

The Panel's consideration of the World Health Organization should address the organisation at large as well as its Emergencies Programme, and include governance considerations.

Reflections and concluding remarks

In closing the meeting, the Co-Chairs thanked the Panel members for their active and engaged participation which had given important direction to the work. The Rt Hon. Helen Clark observed that the Panel does want to ask hard questions, has to put on the table issues such as whether WHO's governance has been a help or a hindrance, and should respond to the challenge of being asked to be bold. HE Ellen Sirleaf Johnson reflected on the importance of addressing the entrenched global inequities felt in so many countries, and that among the Panel's recommendations there need to be proposals for changing a system that has made the poor poorer. She noted that the world's population was depending on the Panel to deliver clarity on the question of what could be done to avert another pandemic.

Meeting Agenda

Tuesday 20 October

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| 12.00 – 12.10 | Welcome remarks by co-chairs |
| 12.10 - 12.20 | Report of the 1 st Panel meeting |
| 12.20 – 12.40 | Program of Work and planned approach to engagement |
| 12.40 – 13.30 | Defining the chronology |
| 13.30 – 14.20 | National and Sub-national responses |
| 14.20 – 14.30 | Summary of the day |

Wednesday 21 October

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| 12.00 – 12.15 | Recap of Day 1 |
| 12.15 – 13.15 | The International System |
| 13.15 – 14.10 | World Health Organization |
| 14.10 – 14.30 | Reflection on the meeting, conclusions and next panel meeting |

List of Attendees

Co-Chairs

HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf,
Rt Hon. Helen Clark

Panel Members

Mauricio Cárdenas
Aya Chebbi
Mark Dybul
Michel Kazatchkine
Joanne Liu
Precious Matsoso
David Miliband
Thoraya Obaid
Preeti Sudan
Ernesto Zedillo,
Zhong Nanshan

Secretariat to the Independent Panel

Anders Nordström
Salma Abdalla
Michael Bartos
Mathias Bonk
Celeste Canlas
Helena Legido-Quigley
Shun Mabuchi
Christine McNab

Advisors

Sudhvir Singh, advisor to Rt Hon. Helen Clark
Raj Panjabi, advisor to HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
George Kronnisanyon Werner, Advisor and Coordinator, Office of HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

*Cover Photo: C. McNab