



Terms of Reference

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response



1. The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the foundations of global health security and resilience and challenged the readiness and responsiveness of the international community to address unforeseen global health threats collectively. It has also demonstrated the indiscriminate impact of this global health ‘shock’ on all aspects of human life – social, political, economic and environmental – across geographies and across the continuum from the international, regional, national, and subnational levels to communities, households and individuals, thus reinforcing the interconnected nature of health emergency preparedness and response. It has also revealed the impact of inequalities within and between societies, as well as the importance of resilient health systems.
2. In May 2020, the Seventy-third World Health Assembly passed resolution WHA73.1, which requested the Director-General:
“to initiate, at the earliest appropriate moment, and in consultation with Member States¹ a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation, including using existing mechanisms², as appropriate, to review experience gained and lessons learned from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19 – including (i) the effectiveness of the mechanisms at WHO’s disposal; (ii) the functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) and the status of implementation of the relevant recommendations of previous IHR Review Committees; (iii) WHO’s contribution to United Nations-wide efforts; and (iv) the actions of WHO and their timelines pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic – and to make recommendations to improve capacity for global pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, including through strengthening, as appropriate, the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.”
3. In July 2020, the Director-General took the initiative to establish an Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response to carry out an impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation of the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19 as one important step and measure to implement the request in the WHA resolution.
4. The Director-General of WHO appointed H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Rt Hon Helen Clark as the co-chairs for the panel and asked them to select the additional panellists themselves in order to ensure maximum independence. The panel will provide progress reports through its co-chairs directly to the WHO governing bodies and will report to the World Health Assembly 2021.
5. The aim of the Independent Panel is to provide an evidence-based path for the future, grounded in lessons of the past and the present, identifying the most urgent needs and actions required to ensure that the world can now, and in the future, effectively address health threats at the national, regional and global levels. The Independent Panel’s objectives are both of a formative and a forward-looking nature.
6. The Panel will neither duplicate nor validate either previous work undertaken in this domain, including in the context of decades of pandemic preparedness and response planning, or previous independent reviews that have aimed to strengthen the world’s preparedness and response abilities. Rather it will draw on past and on-going reviews in order to be able to provide a fresh assessment of the challenges and recommendations for addressing them
7. Specifically, the Panel will review experience gained and lessons learned from the international health response to COVID-19 as coordinated by WHO and assess:

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

² Including an IHR Review Committee and the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.



- (i) the overall relevance and effectiveness of the international health response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - (ii) the functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) and the status of implementation of the relevant recommendations of previous IHR Review Committees;³
 - (iii) the effectiveness of the mechanisms at WHO's disposal and the actions of WHO and their timelines pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic;⁴ and
 - (iv) WHO's contribution to United Nations-wide efforts.
8. In reviewing the *experience gained and lessons learned from the WHO-coordinated international health response to COVID-19* as stated in the resolution the Panel will also:
- (v) examine global health security threats and provide an analysis of past and future challenges and lessons learned;
 - (vi) include in its work analysis of the broader impacts of pandemics, including economic and social ones, and make recommendations to the extent that they have a direct bearing on future threats to global health security.
9. The Panel will:
- (vii) make recommendations to improve capacity for global pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, including through strengthening, as appropriate, the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.
10. The Panel will work in an open and transparent fashion and seek the best possible advice, experiences, and facts from member states and experts across the world.
11. The Panel will have its own independent Secretariat to support its work.
12. The Panel will define a detailed Program of Work, including a methodology for the work and specific timelines. The Panel will share information about its work and progress on a regular basis with Member States and other relevant partners.

³ For this particular objective, the Independent Panel will mainly be informed by the findings and outputs of the IHR Review Committee.

⁴ On this, the Independent Panel will also be informed by the work and outputs of the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.