

Deadline for global pandemic agreement looms

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A high-powered intervention by 23 former national Presidents, 22 former Prime Ministers, a former UN General Secretary, and 3 Nobel Laureates are being made today to press for an urgent agreement from

international negotiators on a Pandemic Accord under the Constitution of the World Health Organization, to bolster the world's collective preparedness and response to future pandemics.

Former UN General Secretary Ban-ki Moon, New Zealand's former Prime Minister Helen Clark, former UK Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, former Malawi President Joyce Banda, former Peru President Francisco Sagasti, and 3 former Presidents of the UN General Assembly are among 100+ [global leaders](#), from all continents and fields of politics, economics, and [health management](#) who today issued a joint [open letter](#) urging accelerated progress in current negotiations to reach the world's first-ever multi-lateral agreement on [pandemic preparedness](#) and prevention.

"A pandemic accord is critical to safeguard our collective future. Only a strong global pact on pandemics can protect [future generations](#) from a repeat of the COVID-19 crisis, which led to millions of deaths and caused widespread social and economic devastation, owing not least to insufficient international collaboration," the leaders write in their joint letter.

In the throes of the COVID-19 disaster, which officially claimed 7 million lives and wiped \$2 trillion from the world economy, inter-governmental negotiations to reach an international agreement on future pandemic non-proliferation were begun in December 2021 between 194 of the world's 196 nations. Nations set themselves a deadline of May 2024, by which they should reach an agreement on what would be the world's first-ever Pandemic Accord.

The [ninth round of Pandemic Accord negotiations](#) are underway this week and next.

Signatories of today's open letter hope their combined influence will

encourage all 194 nations to maintain the courage of their COVID-19 conviction and make their own collective ambition of an international pandemic protocol a reality by the intended May deadline to enable ratification by the World Health Assembly at its May 2024 Annual General Assembly.

And they urge negotiators "to redouble their efforts" to meet the imminent deadline and not let their efforts be blown off course by malicious misinformation campaigning against the WHO, the international organization which would be tasked with implementing the new health accord.

Taking a swipe at those who wrongly believe national sovereignty may be undermined by this major international step forward for public health, the signatories say "there is no time to waste," and they call on the leaders of the 194 nations taking part in the current negotiations to "redouble their efforts to complete the accord by the May deadline."

The letter, hosted on the website of The Office of Gordon and Sarah Brown, states, "Countries are doing this not because of some dictum from the WHO—like the negotiations, participation in any instrument would be entirely voluntary—but because they need what the accord can and must offer.

In fact, a pandemic accord would deliver vast and universally shared benefits, including greater capacity to detect new and dangerous pathogens, access to information about pathogens detected elsewhere in the world, and timely and equitable delivery of tests, treatments, vaccines, and other lifesaving tools.

"As countries enter what should be the final stages of the negotiations, governments must work to refute and debunk false claims about the accord. At the same time, negotiators must ensure that the agreement

lives up to its promise to prevent and mitigate pandemic-related risks."

"This requires, for example, provisions aimed at ensuring that when another pandemic threat does arise, all relevant responses—from reporting the identification of risky pathogens to delivering tools like tests and vaccines on an equitable basis—are implemented quickly and effectively. As the COVID-19 pandemic showed, collaboration between the public and private sectors focused on advancing the public good is also essential."

"A new pandemic threat will emerge; there is no excuse not to be ready for it. It is thus imperative to build an effective, multisectoral, and multilateral approach to pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. Given the unpredictable nature of [public health](#) risks, a global strategy must embody a spirit of openness and inclusiveness. There is no time to waste, which is why we are calling on all national leaders to redouble their efforts to complete the accord by the May deadline."

"Beyond protecting countless lives and livelihoods, the timely delivery of a global pandemic accord would send a powerful message: even in our fractured and fragmented world, international cooperation can still deliver global solutions to global problems."

Provided by World Health Organization (WHO)

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