



Foreign Affairs Committee

From the Chair
Tom Tugendhat MP

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Gebreyesus
Director General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva
Switzerland

By Email

10 May 2022

Dear Dr. Ghebreyesus,

I am writing on behalf of the Committee to urge the WHO to deal with international health challenges in an inclusive manner, with all countries and territories allowed to contribute information and research, and to benefit from global initiatives led by the WHO.

We note that Taiwan played a vital part in the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic, notifying the global community for the first time on 31 December 2019 that human-to-human transmission was taking place, then becoming the first jurisdiction in the world to adopt measures to fight it. Taiwan has since remained fully open to co-operation on research and collaborative measures to deal with Covid-19 and other worldwide threats to health.

Yet in spite of its crucial role in such life-saving global healthcare initiatives, Taiwan has been excluded in recent years from the work of the WHO, denying not only Taiwan but also the rest of the world of the benefits of this co-operation. Taiwan is not receiving timely reports from the WHO. It is excluded from the WHO's laboratory network. The data it sends the WHO is not shared with WHO members, while data purporting to cover Taiwan is misleadingly included in reports from China. Disturbingly, Taiwan is no longer invited to meetings of the World Health Assembly (WHA), which it attended as an Observer from 2009 to 2016.

In February this year the UK House of Commons affirmed that Taiwan's expulsion from the WHO and the WHA was not acceptable in view of Taiwan's impressive contact tracing and border controls. Not a single Member of Parliament spoke against the House's resolution supporting stronger cooperation with Taiwan.

In our 2021 report on global health security (Global Health, Global Britain), we noted that "the WHO, both at WHA and secretariat level, remains vulnerable to unacceptable interference" and that, as one of the witnesses cited in the report concluded, "the ability of the Director General ... to resist these political pressures [is] important for checking the power of individual states." We trust that you are in a strong position to resist attempts to interfere with the inclusiveness of the WHO by any member state and to ensure that the WHO works with and for all world jurisdictions.

We therefore strongly encourage you to ensure that Taiwan resumes its Observer status at the WHA, as recommended by the G7 countries and other WHO members in 2021, and to invite Taiwan to attend the forthcoming 75th World Assembly Meeting on 22-28 May 2022 in that capacity.

TOM TUGENDHAT