



Department of Health & Social Care

*From Ashley Dalton MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

*39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU*

Layla Moran MP
Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee
By email to: layla.moran.mp@parliament.uk

07 May 2025

Dear Layla,

I am writing to update you and the Health and Social Care Committee on the final round of negotiations at the World Health Organization (WHO) on the Pandemic Accord, as well as provide an update on the International Health Regulations (IHR).

The Pandemic Accord

In March 2021, the UK joined other WHO Member States in calling for a Pandemic Accord that would ensure the UK and the world is better prepared for any future pandemics. I am pleased to inform you that following the most recent round of Pandemic Accord negotiations between 7-11 April and 15-16 April, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body of the WHO has reached agreement on the full text. WHO Member States will consider its formal adoption at the World Health Assembly later this month. Crucially, the Accord preserves the sovereignty of all Member States, including the UK's authority to make independent public health decisions during global health emergencies.

The Accord aims to strengthen both UK and global pandemic prevention, preparedness and response capabilities through coordinated action among Member States. By enhancing disease surveillance systems, we can detect and respond to emerging pandemic threats promptly. The Accord will help safeguard lives, livelihoods, economic stability, and the NHS, delivering genuine benefits to UK health security while supporting, jobs and growth, in line with the Government's Plan for Change. It will foster innovation in our life sciences sector by protecting and strengthening R&D investment incentives and enabling companies to have access to essential information, such as pathogen samples and genetic sequences.

Overall, I am confident that the Pandemic Accord is good for the UK, and good for the world. This government has worked hard to secure it. It shows what we can do when countries work together and it is a clear demonstration that this government is both a responsible, modern partner on the world stage, and is determined to deliver its Plan for Change for the British people.

Update on recent negotiations – further detail

Since my last update, UK officials worked closely with our global partners to resolve the key outstanding issues on the Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) system, pandemic prevention, One Health, and intellectual property (IP) and technology transfer.

The Pandemic Accord proposes a new PABS system that aims to help manufacturers to develop vaccines, treatments and diagnostics (VTDs) more quickly in the event of a pandemic and ensure they are distributed equitably globally to those most in need. In return for faster access to pathogen

samples and genomic data, life sciences companies who voluntarily sign up to the PABS system would agree to donate at least 10% of relevant VTDs to the WHO in the event of a pandemic, with the remaining percentage – targeting a total of 20% - to be reserved at affordable prices. UK negotiators argued hard to retain this flexibility in order to enable manufacturers, including SMEs, to sign up to the PABS system. The details of the PABS system will now be worked through, and the UK will play a full part in those discussions.

Transfer of technology during a pandemic could help to diversify production of relevant VTDs, particularly in developing countries, improving global system resilience and efficiency. The UK has always been clear that any transfer of technology must be on a voluntary basis. The agreed text makes clear that any technology transfer must be 'willingly undertaken and on mutually agreed terms'. This will protect innovation and growth in the life sciences sector by preserving voluntary approaches to technology transfer and safeguarding IP rights, ensuring that manufacturers are incentivised to invest in pandemic-related health products.

Negotiators also resolved outstanding and important issues on pandemic prevention. The text outlines how countries are required to strengthen their domestic pandemic prevention and surveillance systems, to prevent pandemics from emerging in the first place, including through the development and implementation of multisectoral national pandemic prevention and surveillance plans. This will include measures such as identifying the drivers associated with emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, strengthening routine immunisation and preventing the emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance. In addition, the inclusion of a 'One Health' approach in the Accord (which recognises the vital link between animal, human and environmental health) strengthens multi-sectoral collaboration, helping to better address the emergence of pandemic risks, many of which originate in animal populations.

WHO Member States will now consider adoption of the Pandemic Accord at the 78th meeting of the World Health Assembly in May. If adopted, Member States will begin negotiations to agree the details of how the PABS system will operate, which is expected to take up to two years. Only once the details of the system are agreed will the Pandemic Accord be opened for signature and ratification by Member States.

International Health Regulations (IHR)

I would also like to update on the IHR, for which targeted amendments were agreed at the WHA in June 2024. The IHR are an important technical framework that helps to prevent and protect against the international spread of disease. Amendments to the IHR were agreed by Member States to reflect lessons learnt from recent global health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, by improving information sharing and collaboration for public health emergency response. Member States have until 19 July 2025 to decide whether to recognise the amendments or to reserve or opt out. The Department of Health and Social Care has been leading work across Government to confirm the implications of the amendments for the UK, working with counterparts in the devolved governments, and our Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to ensure all relevant territories are considered. This analysis will inform the decision about which amendments are in the UK's national interest. No decision has yet been made on which IHR amendments the UK will accept. We will update this Committee once a decision has been made.

I am copying this letter to the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of State for Development, the International Development Committee, the International Agreements Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee and the International Relations and Defence Committee for their awareness.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Dalton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ASHLEY DALTON MP