

WHO UPDATE

May 22, 2023 - WHO update from the World Health Assembly

Here are some eyebrow-raising points from Monday's roundtable entitled: *The World Together: Member State-led processes to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.*

- 1) U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra noted the White House's proposed budget for 2024 includes \$1.6 billion for global health actions. Additionally, he announced a new commitment of \$250 million American taxpayer dollars to the global pandemic fund, on top of the \$450 million previously committed.
- 2) A U.N. ambassador joined the roundtable to discuss a pandemic political declaration to be presented to the U.N. General Assembly that's intended to "give momentum and generous political weight" to the creation of the pandemic treaty and the amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR). The panelists were talking about the three documents working together to strengthen the WHO as the "center of the global health architecture." This document has not yet been released, but it's scheduled for discussion at a U.N. summit in New York in September 2023. SHF will follow this development closely and alert you when there are action steps you can take.
- 3) The co-chair of the working group tasked with drafting the proposed amendments to the IHR for formal vote at the 2024 World Health Assembly expressed a handful of times that the IHR already has all it needs to address a pandemic; the only issue was compliance. Could we interpret his statements to mean he thinks no amendments to the IHR are necessary?
- 4) While the U.S. has been pushing to hasten the pace of giving the WHO more power (remember the U.S. led the charge to shorten the timeline for amendments to be made to the IHR), and many people echoed the urgency of wanting a new treaty as fast as possible because of a looming "next pandemic," a representative of the Russian Federation expressed concern that the process was moving too fast for all nations to have meaningful input. He suggested it wasn't necessary to have amendments and a treaty in place next year. It's a good point — why is the White House pressing forward so quickly, while the U.S. Congress is considering bills to withdraw from the WHO, or otherwise reign in their authority, and also holding hearings to look into the global pandemic response that was largely influenced by the WHO?

SHF will continue to monitor the World Health Assembly through the week and send a final update after it's over.