

Taking steps to bring about a healthier, safer and fairer world

Few gatherings have the chance to be as consequential and important as this World Health Assembly. The UK is committed to working with all so the World Health Organization becomes the organisation we all need it to be.

Not just a powerful partner in world health, but a dynamic force that drives our preparations for pandemics and our responses to them.

But they can only do that if we back them to do it. So I call on fellow member states to look at their WHO funding, to make sure that it is flexible and to scale it up. And to make sure all play their part in the reforms that are needed.

Because this is a mandatory mission – we can't afford not to do it, none of us can – and collective action is the only way.

The UK believes that a pandemic treaty could provide the overarching framework for collective action, but we must not wait for it, we must act now – strengthening funding, strengthening transparency, strengthening our coordination of pandemic response.

All of these are urgent.

For example, we must collectively embrace the revolution in genomic surveillance. And as G7 Presidents, we're working on a proposal for worldwide networks of surveillance centres.

An important step forward to a truly global early warning system.

It's essential we're always drawing on expertise and experience where we find it. Pandemics, after all, affect all of humanity. So all the world must be engaged in this mission.

We believe Taiwan should be allowed to observe the WHA just as it has in the past. And we believe that fair access to life-saving vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics is vital.

As a leading donor to the ACT-Accelerator, to COVAX and to GAVI, we encourage all others to redouble their efforts to support these organisations but much more than this, we need to see vaccines made available at cost.

The UK government funded the research for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, which is available at cost to the whole world. We believe that is the best way to vaccinate all.

Already, this support has allowed 400 million doses to be deployed – two-thirds in low- and middle-income countries.

We call upon other vaccine suppliers to follow the UK approach.

After all, today is a decisive moment. It's a moment when we can use our unity of purpose to take the steps that we can really together bring about a healthier, safer and fairer world.

Thank you.