



Joint Statement on the item 14.2 Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the IHR @EB148

Mr Chairman,

IFPMA welcomes and supports the ongoing work and interim findings of the Review Committee on the Functioning of the IHR during the COVID-19 Response. Many critical issues have arisen through the Committee's review process and it would be impossible for us to address all of these in the short amount of time we have today. Therefore, we would like to focus on the cross-cutting issue of pathogen sharing, which is also addressed under agenda item 14.4 public health implications of Nagoya Protocol.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of timely pathogen sharing in the context of public health emergencies. The criticality of fast, timely and unrestricted access to pathogen information in allowing the development of medical countermeasures and understanding the genomic epidemiology of the virus has been recognised by both the Committee's interim report, under paragraph 42, and the Director-General's report on the 'Public Health Implications of Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol', under paragraph 3.

Though the preamble to the Nagoya Protocol recognises the IHR and "the importance of ensuring access to human pathogens for public health preparedness and response purposes", currently, the global ability to share pathogen samples and their related data in a timely manner is being impacted due to the inefficient and bureaucratically burdensome bilateral system envisaged under the same Protocol, most notably for seasonal influenza viruses. Navigating a system in which each country has different access requirements that must be negotiated bilaterally is simply not feasible when dealing with the emergence of a novel pathogen.

In light of this, IFPMA fully supports the Committee's approach of "conducting an article-by-article analysis" and "considering how the Regulations could facilitate the rapid sharing of scientific findings and samples within the global scientific community under Article 6."