

TWN's Statement on the Pandemic Agreement Adoption

“The adoption of the Pandemic Accord marks the beginning, not the end, of the equity debate.” Sangeeta Shashikant, programme coordinator at Third World Network

Member States are meeting at the 78th World Health Assembly to finalize and adopt the resolution establishing the Pandemic Agreement. The adoption of the Pandemic Agreement is a milestone that follows three years of intense negotiations, deep divides, and difficult compromises. In a world marked by growing health inequities and geopolitical fragmentation, this outcome should be viewed as an initial multilateral effort to address global inequities and promote international cooperation for the prevention, preparedness and response to pandemics. However, the real test lies ahead.

The next phases of negotiations, beginning with the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System (PABS), will determine whether this agreement becomes a meaningful tool for equity or if it remains merely symbolic. At stake is the ability of developing countries to access affordable vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics swiftly and fairly during health emergencies and to realize the ambition of a fairer and more effective global health architecture that can equitably prevent, prepare for and respond to pandemics.

The upcoming PABS discussions offer WHO Members a rare opportunity to build a transparent and accountable system, anchored in legally binding rules for sharing biological materials and sequence data of pathogens with pandemic potential, coupled with enforceable benefit-sharing obligations. This should guarantee rapid access not just during pandemics, but also in emerging outbreaks, before they escalate into global crises.

If these next steps fail, the world may once again face a pandemic armed only with a little more than empty promises, risking a repeat of the devastating failures seen during COVID-19.

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Third World Network (TWN) is a 40-year old independent non-profit international research and advocacy organisation involved in bringing about a greater articulation of the needs, aspirations and rights of the peoples in the South and in promoting just, equitable and ecological development. TWN's mandate comprehends the systematic monitoring and analyses of international, regional and national legal debates on intellectual property, climate, health, agriculture, biodiversity, trade and finance.