

**Debate Pack**

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## UN high-level meetings in 2023

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# 1 Summary

A Westminster Hall debate on UN high-level meetings in 2023 will take place on Tuesday 11 July 2023, from 9:30-11:00am. The debate was scheduled by the Backbench Business Committee and will be led by Virendra Sharma MP.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 UN high-level meetings on health in 2023

In September 2023, [the UN General Assembly will convene three high-level meetings on health](#), focused on:

1. Ending Tuberculosis
2. Delivering universal health coverage
3. Strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness, and responses

The UK Government has confirmed [it will attend all three events](#).

This section summarises UK commitments on these issues, and global progress to date.

### 2.2 The sustainable development goals

2023 marks the half-way point for the implementation of the [17 sustainable development goals \(SDGs\)](#), which were adopted by the UN in 2015 and are intended to be met by 2030. The SDGs include promoting good health and wellbeing, eliminating hunger and poverty, and advancing gender equality.

In April 2023, the [UN Secretary General António Guterres warned that “we have stalled or gone into reverse on more than 30% of the SDGs”](#) and called upon all states to “recommit to seven years of accelerated, sustained and transformative action.”

The Secretary General’s report, [Progress towards the sustainable development goals: Towards a rescue plan for people and planet](#) (May 2023), will be discussed at the [second SDG summit](#) at the UN in September 2023.

## 2.3

## UK aid strategy and spending on health

**The UK's international development strategy**

The UK Government launched a new, ten-year international development strategy in May 2022. It is [expected to be supplemented by a further strategy](#) focused on how the UK will help the world achieve the SDGs by 2030.

As set out in section 6 of the Commons Library research briefing on [The UK's 2022 aid strategy](#), global health is one of the four priorities for UK aid spending.

The strategy includes commitments to invest in vaccines and diagnostics, building stronger health systems and global health surveillance, [making investments in Gavi, the vaccine alliance](#), and the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria](#), and helping to end preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children.

The Department of Health and Social Care and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office policy paper, [Global health framework](#) (May 2023) provides more detail on how the Government plans to strengthen global health security and country health systems.

**UK aid spending on health**

In 2021, [health was the second largest sector \(13.6%\) to receive UK bilateral aid in 2021](#), totalling £970 million. This was down £620 million (39%) compared to 2020. Part of this decrease was due to reduced levels of spend on the health sector in response to Covid-19, but also reflects [wider reductions in the UK aid budget](#). These spending figures do not include contributions to multilateral organisations, such as the UN.

Spending plans for 2023 have not been announced, though the UK has made some future commitments:

4. **Gavi, the vaccine alliance:** [£1.65 billion from 2021 to 2025](#), up from £1 billion for the 2016 to 2020 period. From 2000 to June 2020, [the UK was its biggest funder, providing a quarter of total contributions](#), totalling £4 billion. Gavi supports regular immunisation and vaccination campaigns.
5. **The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB) and Malaria:** [The UK has pledged £1 billion for 2023 to 2025](#), down from £1.4 billion for 2020 to 2022. [The Global Fund provides 76% of all international financing for TB](#).
6. **World Health Organization (WHO):** [£340 million in core contributions](#) for 2020 to 2024, up 30% on the previous period.

The [UK's work on helping address global health threats](#) was rated “green/amber” by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) in 2018. The ICAI said the UK's aid programme generally contributed to strengthening disease surveillance and improving the resilience of health systems.

## 2.4 Ending Tuberculosis

[Tuberculosis \(TB\) is caused by bacteria](#) spread through the air when people with the disease cough, sneeze, or spit. It primarily targets the lungs.

[SDG 3.3](#) sets out an aim to eliminate communicable disease including TB, AIDS, and Malaria by 2030.

The WHO states that worldwide, [TB is the second cause of death from an infectious disease](#) (after Covid-19, and above HIV/AIDS).

The Covid-19 pandemic reversed many years of decline in the number of cases of TB and deaths from the disease. The [latest WHO Global TB report](#) estimated that around 1.6 million people died from TB in 2021. This was higher than the two previous years (1.5 million, 2020, and 1.4 million, 2019). 10.6 million fell ill with TB worldwide in 2021.

The Global Fund notes that [drug-resistant TB and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic are “major challenges”](#) to eliminating TB. [WHO analysis suggests a significant fall in TB diagnosis in 2020 and 2021](#) due to the pandemic and a decline in global spending in essential TB services (from US\$6 billion in 2019 to US\$5.4 billion in 2021). It says this funding is “less than half of what is needed.”

Section 2.2 of the Commons Library research briefing on UK [aid and the Global Fund for fight HIV, TB and Malaria](#) (November 2022) provides more statistics on the incidence of TB and the work of the Global Fund.

## 2.5 Delivering universal health coverage

[SDG target 3.8](#) is for the world to achieve universal health coverage (UHC). This includes financial risk protection, access to essential health care services for all, and access to safe, effective, and affordable medicines and vaccines.

[2023 World Bank analysis on progress towards the SDG target](#) found continuing inequalities in health service coverage. 31 of the 193 countries with data were scoring “high” on the SDG measure, while 16 were scoring “low.” Low-scoring countries were predominantly in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as Afghanistan and Papua New Guinea. The [indicator measures](#) are based on

factors including access to a range of services, including for infectious diseases, child health, and reproductive and maternal health.

The World Bank analysis noted that while up to 2017 [financial protection when accessing healthcare was “improving.”](#) 1.4 billion people (18% of the global population) had been pushed into or pushed further into poverty by their medical expenses (poverty being defined as US\$3.20 per day), and 500 million (7%) had been pushed into extreme poverty (US\$1.90 per day). More than half lived in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The proportion of the population spending more than 10% of their annual income on health needs had also increased since 2000, reaching one billion in 2017.

Separate WHO surveys found that [the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted essential services in more than 90% of countries](#) at its height in 2021. This included TB diagnosis and treatment services (51% of countries from January to March 2021), reproductive, maternal and child health services (35%) and regular immunisation programmes (34%).

The [issue of UHC was considered by Commonwealth Health Ministers](#) in May 2023. They resolved to support the UN meetings in September and pledged to:

7. work collectively to monitor progress on healthcare
8. share best practices and expertise on strengthening primary health care
9. consider a rights-based approach and address gender inequality

Commonwealth ministers also acknowledged “underinvestment in primary health care services, including the continued financial burden of out-of-pocket expenditure is a key barrier in impeding the achievement of our targets.” They [committed to work with finance ministers to increase domestic resources](#).

## 2.6

### Strengthening pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

The first objective of the UK’s [Global health framework](#) (May 2023) is to strengthen global health security through improved preparedness and response to future pandemics.

Pledges to meet this objective include the “100 Days Mission,” [launched under the G7 presidency](#). This sets out an aim to make diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines available within 100 days of a future pandemic. In the UK, [the Health Security Agency has responsibility for the mission](#). The International

Pandemic Preparedness Secretariat published its [latest annual implementation report in January 2023](#).

The UK Government is also supporting negotiations for a Pandemic Preparedness Treaty being negotiated at the World Health Organisation. The Government has [expressed support for the Treaty](#) and has said it is “actively shaping its design to ensure it improves how the world prevents, prepares for, and responds to future disease outbreaks of pandemic potential”. The Government, however, [emphasised that](#) “the key will be to ensure the final text is clearly in the UK national interest”.

A [petition calling for the government not to sign a new Pandemic Preparedness treaty without a public referendum](#) received 156,086 signatures in six months, before it closed in November 2022. [The petition received a Government response](#) after achieving 10,000 signatures. The Government said that it supported a new legally binding instrument “as part of a cooperative and comprehensive approach to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.”

The petition was successfully considered for Parliamentary debate after achieving 100,000 signatures, and the debate [took place](#) on 17 April 2023.

Negotiations are governed by the [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body](#) at the WHO, set up specifically to negotiate this proposed treaty.

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) held a series of meetings in March and April 2022 to discuss proposals for the treaty. Further meetings have been held in December 2022, February-March 2023, with more planned throughout 2023. Minutes and proposed agendas of the meetings are available [on the WHO INB website](#).

The [Zero Draft of the treaty](#), known as the Zero Draft of WHO CA+, was [published on 1 February 2023](#), and discussed at the [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body’s fourth meeting](#) between 27 February 2023 and 3 March 2023.

Because the Zero Draft is the starting point for negotiations, the substantive provisions and content of the treaty could change.

Alongside the development of the Pandemic Preparedness Treaty, the WHO is also undertaking a review of the [International Health Regulations 2005 \(IHR\)](#). [According to the WHO](#), the IHR is:

... a key international instrument on international health, rooted in the WHO Constitution. The IHR was established to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.

Because the IHR already provides for some of the legal basis for international responses to “public health emergencies of international concern”, the

regulations therein are relevant to the development of the Pandemic Preparedness Treaty. As part of this process, [more than 300 amendments have been proposed](#) by States Parties. These amendments were subject to a review by the [Review Committee regarding amendments to the International Health Regulations](#).

Further details of negotiations, the UK's position, and an explanation of how these relate to the proposed amendments to the International Health Regulations, are set out in the Commons Library Research Briefing [What is the proposed WHO Pandemic Preparedness Treaty?](#) (June 2023).

## 3 Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

### 3.1 Tuberculosis

['Gamechanging' TB vaccine within reach after \\$500m pledge to run final trials](#)

The Guardian  
Sarah Boseley  
28 June 2023

[Tuberculosis](#)

World Health Organisation  
21 April 2023

[PAHO calls on countries to accelerate action towards ending tuberculosis](#)

Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO)  
24 March 2023

[TB is a hidden pandemic – we ignore it at our peril](#)

The Daily Telegraph  
Peter Sands  
21 March 2023

### 3.2 Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

[How does universal health coverage work?](#)

The Commonwealth Fund

[Universal Health Coverage](#)

The World Bank  
6 October 2022

[How Universal Health Coverage makes SDGs doable](#)

IFPMA  
Vanessa Peberdy  
19 May 2023



**In 2023 G20 and G7 must empower nations to build universal health coverage**

Politico

13 December 2022

## 3.1

## Pandemic preparedness

**Multilateral health: Developing a habit of pandemic preparedness**

European Council on Foreign Relations

Anthony Dworkin

4 July 2023

**Pandemic Financing: Losing on All Fronts?**

Health Policy Watch

Seyed-Moeen Hosseinalipour and Alessia Nicastro

4 July 2023

**How to beat the next pandemic in just 100 days**

Science Museum Group

Roger Highfield

1 December 2022

**What will it take? Global coalition outlines how to beat the next disease X pandemic in 100 days**

Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations CEPI

25 November 2022

**The UK risks stepping off the world stage by abandoning the fight against pandemics**

The Daily Telegraph

Steve Brine MP

10 November 2022

## 4

## Press releases

### [100 Days Mission to Respond to Future Pandemic Threats](#)

Cabinet Office

12 June 2021

Reducing the impact of future pandemics by making Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Vaccines available within 100 days. A report to the G7 by the pandemic preparedness partnership.

## 5

## PQs

**Public Health: International Cooperation**

03 Jul 2023 | 191034

**Asked by: John Howell**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the debate on Public Health emergency: the need for a holistic approach to multilateralism and health care at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 20 June 2023.

**Answering member: Will Quince | Department of Health and Social Care**

No assessment has been made on this debate at this point, but we continue to work closely with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office on global health issues and governance raised in the relevant debate discussed including negotiations on the targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the new Pandemic Instrument at the World Health Organization and in preparation for the High Level Meetings at the United Nations General Assembly in September.

The United Kingdom continues to negotiate the text of the Pandemic Instrument and the amendments to the IHR to ensure they delivers on our priorities and provide the tools to achieve improvements globally in key areas of health emergency preparedness, prevention, and response. The Department of Health and Social Care also works closely with the Department for Business and Trade on health related issues linked to the World Trade Organization.

**World Health Organisation: Disease Control**

28 Jun 2023 | 190813

**Asked by: Esther McVey**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which (a) Government department and (b) Minister has responsibility for negotiations on (i) the World Health Organization Pandemic Preparedness Treaty and (ii) proposed amendments to the World Health Organization International Health Regulations (2005); and what recent assessment the Government has made of the potential effects of these measures.

**Answering member: Will Quince | Department of Health and Social Care**

The negotiations taking place at the World Health Organization (WHO) on the Pandemic Instrument are jointly led by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office. The negotiations taking place on the proposed amendments to the International

Health Regulations 2005 (IHR) are being led by the Department of Health and Social Care. Myself and the Minister of State for Development and Africa, the Rt Hon Andrew Mitchell MP.

Both negotiations are Member State led and no text or amendments have been agreed yet for either instrument. The UK continues to negotiate the text of the Pandemic Instrument and the amendments to the IHR to ensure delivery of our priorities and provide the tools to achieve improvements globally in key areas of health emergency preparedness, prevention, and response. This could include promoting fast and open sharing of genetic sequencing data and pathogen samples; improving the implementation of the IHR; strengthening surveillance and detection of emerging diseases; strengthening health systems; increasing timeliness of emergency reporting; and promoting international collaboration on science and research.

### World Health Organisation: Disease Control

20 Jun 2023 | 188976

#### **Asked by: Ben Lake**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what recent steps he has taken to help ensure that (a) stakeholders and (b) the public are able to feed into (i) the UK's position and (ii) responses to amendments submitted by other countries on the World Health Organisation's Pandemic Preparedness Treaty.

#### **Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

From the beginning of negotiations on the pandemic instrument, the UK has engaged with academics, civil society organisations, trade associations and other non-state actors to aid policy development in specific areas.

Additionally, the Bureau of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) and the World Health Organisation have encouraged and facilitated non-state actor participation, informal consultations and formal public hearings, and have considered formal written submissions. Non-state actors, as nominated by Member States, can contribute to open INB sessions on the instrument. The UK will continue to engage with stakeholders throughout the negotiating process.

### United Nations: Health Services

01 Jun 2023 | 86549

**Asked by: Fleur Anderson**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether a minister will attend the UN High-level meeting on universal health coverage in September 2023.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

UK Ministers are looking forward to attending the 2023 UN General Assembly in September and will ensure high representation at the three global health high-level meetings (HLM) on universal health coverage, TB and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

Universal health coverage is a priority for the UK and we are with partners, working to use the high-level meeting as an important opportunity to revitalise political commitment to and drive stronger action toward achieving universal health coverage by 2030. Exact UK Ministerial representation across the three HLMs will be confirmed in due course.

### Global Health Policies

30 Jan 2023 | 827 cc422-425

**Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they will take to promote the global health policies specified in their strategy for international development, published on 16 May 2022, at the United Nations High-level meeting on universal health coverage in September.

**Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

My Lords, we are advocating for a joined-up agenda across the high-level meetings on universal health coverage, tuberculosis and pandemic preparedness and response. Working through the UN General Assembly and the World Health Organization, and with our partners, we are promoting a co-ordinated approach that strengthens health systems to achieve universal health coverage, improve global health security and end preventable deaths of mothers, babies and children.

**Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury**

My Lords, the latter part of the Minister's Answer is precisely what this Question about, because the high-level meeting is an opportunity to make progress on ending preventable deaths and strengthening health systems, both of which are key priorities of the Government. However, that will be achieved only if we have global leadership and global leaders supporting it.

One way to build momentum would be for the United Kingdom to provide leadership and signal now that either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary will attend. Can the Minister commit to that now?

**Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

My Lords, I think I would cause some concern to the diary secretaries of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary if I were to do that. However, I take the point that the noble Lord has raised: in any international forum, it is important that we see senior leadership and senior members of His Majesty's Government representing the United Kingdom's interests. I pay tribute to the noble Lord's work on issues of nutrition, et cetera. I am sure he will agree that we have continued to stand firm on issues such as vaccinations, therapeutics and diagnostics—that is the Government's approach, which I believe is the right approach. We also underline that with strong support, including for the Global Fund and in areas such as Gavi, to ensure that issues of health and vaccination are kept at the forefront of the discussions within international health structures.

**Asked by: Lord Foulkes of Cumnock**

My Lords, my friends at Age International have reminded me that access to healthcare in developing countries is even more difficult for older people, who are more vulnerable. The number of older people in developing countries is increasing rapidly. That is all acknowledged in the paper that the FCDO has produced. So what will the Minister do to ensure that the UN high-level meeting takes account specifically of the needs of older people?

**Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

My Lords, there are many vulnerable groups across developing nations who need our assistance—that is why global health structures are important. Our approach has been to target specific levels of support to different communities to ensure workable solutions on the ground. For example, we work with partner Governments and multilateral partners to strengthen health systems for all, including the elders. We are increasing support for women giving birth in health facilities; for example, in Nepal, that has risen from 9% in 2001 to 80% in 2022, specifically for young mothers. We are working in Nigeria to help a large uplift in support for vulnerable communities there. We are also adopting new technologies to ensure that we can deliver healthcare; we have a telemedicine pilot for reaching remote communities, including elders, in Brazil. Those are just some examples, and I will be happy to discuss with the noble Lord other examples of what we do across the globe.

### Infectious Diseases: Disease Control

23 Jan 2023 | 125500

**Asked by: Kenny MacAskill**

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what the agreed aims are of the 100 Days Mission established by the UK Government to address the UK's ability to deploy effective diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines within 100 days of a future pandemic threat; if he will publish the amount of public funding spent in relation to that mission; and if he will make a statement.

**Answering member: Maria Caulfield | Department of Health and Social Care**

100 Days Mission to Respond to Future Pandemic Threats is a global public-private effort to harness scientific innovation to have safe and effective diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines ready to be deployed within the first 100 days of a future pandemic threat being identified and be ready to do so equitably by 2026.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) shares the commitment and vision for the 100 Days Mission (100DM). UKHSA aim to, drive the momentum and coordinate reporting across government and partners, coordinate UKHSA's contribution to the 100DM domestically and internationally and work across UKHSA to ensure we have the right tools to respond to new pandemic threats on behalf of the United Kingdom.

The UK Government has not allocated a specific amount of funding to the 100DM, however, public funding spent by the organisation relate to ensuring capabilities which include pandemic preparedness.

### Tuberculosis

02 Dec 2022 | 95862

**Asked by: Chris Law**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether he will be representing the Government at the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on TB in September 2023.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The UK welcomes the UN High Level Meeting on TB in September 2023 and is aiming for a successful outcome that supports achieving the Sustainable Development Goal target on TB. No decision has yet been made on UK Government representation. This will be confirmed in advance of the High Level Meeting.

### Development Aid: Tuberculosis

02 Dec 2022 | 95861

**Asked by: Chris Law**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, whether his Department is taking steps to provide funding for international programmes to help support people with tuberculosis with the high costs they incur as a consequence of that illness.

**Answering member: Mr Andrew Mitchell | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The World Health Organisation's 2022 Global Tuberculosis Report estimates that 10.6 million people fell ill with TB in 2021, a 4.5 per cent increase from the previous year. The number of people dying from TB rose from 1.5 to 1.6 million, the second successive yearly rise. The report also shows a 3 per cent increase in the burden of drug-resistant TB (DR-TB), with 450,000 new cases of rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) in 2021. These increases follow many years of sustained progress to reduce the burden of TB and reflect the impact of COVID-19 on country health systems.

The UK Government supports the World Health Organisation's End TB strategy towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 target to end the epidemic of tuberculosis by 2030. The UK's £1 billion pledge for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria's seventh replenishment will help the Global Fund and its partners provide TB treatment and care for 1.1 million people, screen 20 million people for TB, and provide 42,000 people with treatment for multidrug-resistant TB. In addition to this the Government also supports research and development in to new tools, evidence and medicine to combat TB; catalytic interventions to bring down prices of new products and tackle barriers to widespread access to TB diagnostics and treatments; and provides bilateral support to TB endemic countries to strengthen their health systems.

### Development Aid: Health Services

16 May 2022 | 393

**Asked by: Preet Kaur Gill**

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps her Department is taking to support global health systems and maintain access to critical routine immunisations.

**Answering member: Amanda Milling | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is working to deliver the objectives set out in our recently published Health Systems Strengthening Position Paper –



<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-systems-strengthening-for-global-health-security-and-universal-health-coverage>

This includes the mainstreaming of a health systems strengthening approach across all the UK's health influencing activities and investments through country programmes, research and multilaterals such as the World Health Organisation, Global Fund and Gavi. The UK's £1.65 billion commitment to Gavi's core immunisation programme 2021-25 is the largest of any donor, and will support Gavi to immunise 300 million children and save up to 8 million lives, and enable countries to restore immunisation services during and after the pandemic.

## 6

# Other Parliamentary material

### Publication of the 2023 UK Biological Security Strategy

**12 June 2023 | HCWS841**

The Strategy sets out the Government's ambition to ensure that by 2030 the UK is resilient to a spectrum of biological threats and a world leader in responsible innovation, making a positive impact on global health, economic and security outcomes.

### Covid-19 in developing countries: Secondary impacts

**26 January 2021 | International Development Committee | HC 1186**

Within its report, the IDC warned the secondary impacts – ranging from non-covid healthcare to hunger, and crippling international debt to gender inequality – could be more severe than the virus itself to countries in the Global South. The IDC found widespread disruptions to routine vaccination programmes, rising unemployment leading to fears of accessing food and lockdowns resulting in increased gender-based violence.

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