

2023 UNHLMs: Declarations alone won't make "health for all" a reality

Last week, leaders, heads of state and governments from around the world gathered in New York at the occasion of the 78th [United Nations General Assembly](#). Global health was high on the agenda, with three United Nations high-level meetings taking place on Pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response (PPR), Universal health coverage (UHC) and Tuberculosis (TB).

The main outcome of these meetings was supposed to be the adoption by the international community of three political declarations setting the tone for the road toward the 2030 deadline with clear and ambitious commitments. Instead, many experts and global health advocates worldwide agree¹ to say the final documents are both a great disappointment and missed opportunities, or even a complete lie². Overall, the three declarations offer no significant advancement on previous international agreements and no systematic efforts to strengthen health systems resilience, nor do they outline clear financial targets or a solid accountability framework. They also offer no strong guarantees to effectively back up the principle of equity.

Halfway through reaching the Sustainable Development Goals' deadline, the world cannot afford to let the momentum come to a full stop: global health must and should remain a high-level priority. Although many have claimed in the past few years and yet again last week, that they have learned the lessons from the Covid-19 crisis, where do we really stand collectively if the world still doesn't understand that words alone do not prevent pandemics? Next year, the international community will adopt a new global pandemic treaty, in parallel with the revision of the international health regulations. This represents a strong opportunity to effectively strengthen the global health architecture. The European Union and France must play an active role in these processes so we end up with ambitious instruments placing equity and solidarity at the core, and with concrete guarantees and provisions to back them up.

Finally, despite some missed opportunities such as the absence of explicit commitments to ensure public funding for R&D comes tied with access conditionalities, we believe, alongside the TB CSO international community³, that the [political declaration on tuberculosis](#) does contain some wins. Those wins notably include stronger positioning on the need to guarantee financial and social protections for TB-affected communities, the explicit recognition of access to innovation as a fundamental human right or the inclusion of time-bound specific targets for TB R&D funding. Yet, the commitments made will hold little value without translation into concrete actions, as we have been [calling both France and the EU](#) to make.

At the United Nations high-level meeting on TB, French Minister of Health Aurélien Rousseau called its counterparts to double collective efforts to end TB by 2030 and reaffirmed that *"France would always answer present when it comes to TB R&D and support to international organisations"*. In November, Paris will host the [International Union against tuberculosis and lung disease Conference](#): this is the perfect occasion to demonstrate such a commitment, and confirm French historical leadership in the fight against the disease. Alongside its EU counterparts, France needs to seize this opportunity and translate promises into actions, through the announcement of new ambitious financial commitments for TB R&D and of concrete measures to foster equitable access to technological and medical innovations resulting from research & development.

¹ <https://www.devex.com/news/advocates-say-the-un-pandemic-meeting-was-a-dud-what-s-next-106240>

² [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(23\)02023-8/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(23)02023-8/fulltext)

³ <https://www.globalfundadvocatesnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Hub-Statement-on-the-Political-Declaration.pdf>