



## High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, 20 September 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Hon. Chris Fearne, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Malta and Minister for Health

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President,

My Brother Dr Tedros,

Colleagues,

It is possibly obvious that when we talk about Prevention of the emergence of future pandemics, international, indeed, global co-operation and co-ordination is essential.

The emergence of a virulent strain in any one part of the world has the potential of spreading worldwide and therefore – literally – what happens anywhere effects everywhere.

Preventing the emergence of new strains therefore is by necessity a global concern.

When we however discuss preparedness and response to pandemics – the need to work closely together may appear less obvious, and the temptation for single Member States to go alone is higher.

But preparedness and response are – like prevention – also of necessity global concerns.



The repeated emergence of mutants and covid variants have taught us this. As long as covid was, and remains prevalent somewhere, the danger of the emergence of variants which then spread everywhere, remains.

For small countries - like Malta, and especially for small island states, again like Malta, co-operation and collaboration are essential.

Hundreds, if not thousands of lives were saved in Malta thanks to the early and extensive rollout of the covid vaccine in 2021.

This was only possible because of the joint negotiation and joint procurement model adopted by the European Union.

The Advanced Purchase Agreements and joint acquisition of the vaccine in all EU Member States meant that citizens across the whole of the EU had equitable access to the vaccine, irrespective to the size of their 'market'.

This model of joint procurement, which saved tens of thousands of lives across the European Union needs to be celebrated for the amazing success that it was.

And we need to make sure that there is the political will to replicate the joint procurement model in future pandemics.

The legislative framework for establishing this success story as a best practice needs to be in place as soon as possible.



And other regions may do well in looking at something that worked so well and consider expanding it onto a global scale.

Mr President

Our deliberations, our treaties, documents and agreements will be of little use, if we do not have an adequate health workforce on the ground.

During the pandemic we applauded our frontliners. We recognised their commitment and competence in saving lives.

Now – in the calm between storms – we need to respect them.

Respect our health workforce by providing training, resources and by incentivizing and adequately rewarding them.

In large parts of the world services are suffering due to insufficient health workers.

An essential part of any pandemic treaty must recognize and mitigate towards this. Our health services are only as good as our health workers.

Finally,

As President in office of the World Health Assembly, I can assure you that as evidenced in the 76th World Health Assembly last May, WHO member states remain committed to working together towards assuming co-ordinated prevention, preparedness and an effective response to future pandemics.



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Thank you.