

I hope you had a good Christmas break.

I would like to share my ongoing concerns regarding the WHO plans for a Pandemic Treaty and International Health Regulation Amendments (IHRA).

The WHO is a non-democratic organisation, with funding from multiple, non-democratic commercial organisations and NGOs (<https://www.who.int/about/funding/>). The Pandemic Treaty and IHRA have the potential to make WHO-decisions binding on all participating States. The track record of the WHO, especially during the Covid-pandemic was appalling and the recent declaration of Monkeypox as a Public Health Emergency by Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organisation (an appointment endorsed by China, not by the UK) was another case in point. The changes in IHRA are of concern, for instance Human Rights have been replaced with equity. Also, the timeframe for any future amendments has been significantly shortened to make scrutiny and stopping amendments even more difficult.

Whereby global collaboration on health matters can be positive, decisions about any rules or regulations should remain the prerogative of any sovereign state, whilst the rights of the individual remain sacrosanct. We have seen how much damage authoritarian rules caused at individual level in the UK alone, can you imagine the damage if a global, non-democratic entity starts making these decisions? The general public is blissfully unaware of these developments, which has the potential for major impact on their lives.

The IHRA were not voted on at the 75th World Health Assembly on May 24, 2022 and not submitted to UK parliament for 21-day review as required by law. Therefore, a Petition was launched in Spring 2023 to ask for a vote in UK parliament on the IHRA. This petition collected over 110,000 signatures, which triggered a debate regarding this petition on the 18th of December 2023 in Westminster Hall.

As this is a cause close to my heart, I attended in person. There were 7 conservative MPs (of which one was the government minister for Health), one independent MP, 1 labour MP and just over 30 members of the public.

It was clear from the speeches made by the backbench MPs; they all have grave concerns about the WHO Pandemic treaty and the proposed IHRA with some excellent questions for the Minister for Health. Christopher Chope especially did make some excellent common-sense points in his speech (<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/5e1f14d2-72b3-488f-a53c-fc94fee92dac> , his speech is between 17.30-1750).

The Minister for Health's response was unsatisfactory at several levels. First of all, the deadline for rejecting the IHRA has now passed (this was the 1st of December 2023 and the debate was held on the 18th of December 2023, which made this debate slightly pointless). Secondly, negotiations are apparently being held behind closed doors by civil servants under his guidance, but he was not able to say which amendments were being negotiated and in what direction, which indicates a lack of transparency towards his colleagues in parliament and also towards the general public. Ultimately some far reaching rules and regulations are being negotiated without our input or knowledge. Parliamentary approval is apparently not needed as an executive branch of the Government can sign this during the 77th World Health Assembly on the 24th of May 2024.

The shadow Health minister did not appear to see a problem at all. She repeated the mantra 'we are not safe until we are all safe'-mantra to audible jeering from the audience and stated that a global response to any further health emergency was essential.

But we may be saved by the timing of all of this. According to Article 55 of the IHR, any amendments require 4 months of advance notice, which means that the deadline for this notice is the 27th of January 2024 for the 77th World Health Assembly on the 24th of May 2024. If we go past this deadline without any notice there is a procedural problem. However, I hope that more MPs realise the implications of the proposed changes and act accordingly.

In summary, I can see no reason why any country would agree to these IHRA or Pandemic Treaty. It would mean that decisions could be made at supra-national level, which may not be in the best interest of the people of any country. By all means, try and collaborate, but giving decision power to an organisation with such a poor track record is simply not a good idea.

I would quite like to understand the lack of transparency for these negotiations. These negotiations are not commercially sensitive and have the potential to affect us all. I would also like to understand the additional funding the WHO is asking for. We, the taxpayers, would be paying for this.

I look forward to your answers.

Kind regards,