

**Taiwan is an indispensable partner on the path to global
postpandemic recovery**

**Support Taiwan's regular participation in all WHO
meetings, mechanisms, and activities**

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began over two years ago, it has wreaked havoc across the globe. With still no end in sight, it is all the more crucial that we work together to face the challenges arising from the pandemic. For the past two years, Taiwan's antipandemic efforts, its contributions to the international community, and its cooperation with partners worldwide have demonstrated that Taiwan is a force for good. It has also shown that Taiwan is willing and able to join global efforts to combat the pandemic and tackle the myriad challenges of the postpandemic era.

A leader in global public health, the World Health Organization (WHO) is the most important organization dedicated to safeguarding the right to health. However, due to political considerations, WHO has been unable to uphold professionalism and neutrality. By continuing to exclude Taiwan, WHO is severely jeopardizing global health. Taiwan calls on every nation to support its bid to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) as

an Observer in 2022 and endorse Taiwan's regular participation in all WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities.

1. Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping

1.1. Taiwan's health care capabilities have received international praise

In 2022, Taiwan topped global database Numbeo's Health Care Index for the fourth year in a row. In January 2022, Bloomberg's Covid Resilience Ranking placed Taiwan eighth worldwide, based on such factors as vaccine coverage rates, cross-border virus control, and health care quality.

1.2. Taiwan recognized by WHO IPPR for taking lead in reporting COVID-19

The WHO established the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR) in 2020, which incorporated feedback from a wide range of experts and stakeholders to evaluate antipandemic responses worldwide. The IPPR's main report, published in May 2021, noted that Taiwan's disease surveillance systems picked up a notice issued by China about pneumonia of unknown origin in December 2019 and reported it to WHO. This important report was one of the first that WHO received about COVID-

19, and it highlights Taiwan's contributions to global antipandemic efforts.

1.3. Taiwan has utilized digital technologies to combat pandemic

Taiwan has leveraged smart technologies, such as apps, web-based tools, and other information technologies, and integrated them with the National Health Insurance database to develop innovative antipandemic policies and measures. This approach has benefited the COVID-19 vaccination registration platform, the COVID-19 Vaccination Record, and rapid antigen and PCR testing. Taiwan's antipandemic efforts have made it possible to efficiently monitor and control domestic outbreaks. Moving forward, Taiwan will continue to share its experience and success in utilizing technology to help the world jointly combat the pandemic.

2. Taiwan has leveraged medical research and development strengths to contribute to global antipandemic efforts

Taiwan would be pleased to enhance cooperation and exchanges with international research teams and further its contributions to the global fight against COVID-19.

2.1. Taiwan is actively developing COVID-19 antiviral drug candidates that inhibit viral replication and have conferred protection against COVID-19 in animal studies.

2.2. To strengthen its vaccine research and development

capabilities, Taiwan is actively pursuing research in key vaccine manufacturing processes and establishing an innovative technological platform for mRNA vaccines. In addition, one of Taiwan's domestically produced vaccines has already been granted emergency use and production authorization. It is recognized by a number of countries, including Belize, Estonia, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Palau, Paraguay, Somaliland, and Thailand.

2.3. The Taiwan Food and Drug Administration (TFDA) is a full member of the Pharmaceutical Inspection Co-operation Scheme (PIC/S), the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH), and the International Pharmaceutical Regulators Programme (IPRP). The international recognition afforded the TFDA demonstrates the technological advancement of Taiwan's pharmaceutical industry and the maturity of Taiwan's pharmaceutical regulations.

3. Taiwan's participation in WHO has significant room for improvement

3.1. IHR

The International Health Regulations (IHR) set a legal framework for handling cross-border public health events

and emergencies. Through an exchange of letters, the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (Taiwan CDC) established a Point of Contact (PoC) to report and communicate disease information to the WHO Contact Point under the IHR mechanism, as well as to engage in the international referral of communicable disease cases (including contact cases). However, Taiwan's PoC contact information has not been included on the IHR intranet, namely the Event Information Site (EIS). This has prevented other countries from accessing Taiwan's contact information through regular IHR channels and exchanging disease development reports with Taiwan in a timely manner. It has even led to the erroneous communication of such reports to China's National Focal Point (NFP) instead of Taiwan's PoC, gravely impacting the efficacy of international health cooperation.

3.2. WHO WPRO

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of global cooperation and regional support to combat disease. WHO regional offices, which implement the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, serve as important platforms for conducting medical and health care work. Taiwan is located within the geographical scope of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO), which covers East Asia and the

Western Pacific. Although Taiwan is a major regional transportation and travel hub, it is unable to directly contact the WPRO. It is also unable to interact with or engage in exchanges with health authorities in the region under the WPRO framework. This has seriously impeded Taiwan's efforts to consult with these countries on pandemic developments and coordinate antipandemic border control policies. Furthermore, it has hindered Taiwan's ability to share its advanced technologies and experience with the region.

3.3. COVID-19 surveillance

Viral genome sequencing provides important data for the identification and tracking of variants. While Taiwan has continued to conduct influenza surveillance and implement prevention and control measures, WHO has yet to recognize Taiwan's competent agency as a national influenza center under the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS). Taiwan is also unable to provide virus surveillance information to other countries through GISRS. Nonetheless, the government of Taiwan proactively shares data on influenza virus strains each year with GISRS members through related countries. For instance, when Taiwan discovered its first case of swine influenza (H1N2v) infection in humans, it promptly reported the incident to

WHO, which published the information on the IHR EIS. GISRS is currently seeking to share COVID-19 genome sequencing information. If Taiwan is unable to directly report COVID-19 variants and other surveillance data through GISRS, global public health will be undermined and efforts to effectively prevent the spread of similar variants will be hindered.

3.4. COVID-19 technical meetings

Taiwan actively seeks to be invited to all WHO technical meetings, activities, and mechanisms to facilitate international antipandemic efforts and technical exchanges. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan's participation has continued to be sporadic and on a case-by-case basis. Taiwan received invitations to only 13 of the 21 technical meetings it applied for in 2021. WHO has made slight improvements in facilitating Taiwan's regular participation. However, these continue to be insufficient to meet Taiwan's global public health system participation needs and do not allow Taiwan to fully and professionally contribute through WHO.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded the world that disease knows no borders. Having been left isolated and unsupported

during previous epidemics, Taiwan deeply understands the importance of mutual assistance and strengthening resilience to creatively meet challenges. Taiwan is an indispensable partner on the path to global postpandemic recovery and hopes to work with WHO and nations worldwide to jointly overcome this crisis. Taiwan stands firm in its commitment to engage in international health care cooperation and once again calls on WHO to maintain a professional and neutral stance, repudiate inappropriate political interference, and invite Taiwan to the WHA as an Observer. Only the popularly elected government of Taiwan can represent its 23.5 million people at WHO and protect their right to health. WHO must seek appropriate methods for Taiwan's institutionalized and regular participation in all WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities. Taiwan also urges its international friends and partners to continue to staunchly support its participation in the global health network to enable Taiwan to contribute even more in the postpandemic era.