

PH facilitates dialogue between developing countries and WHO Director General, reaffirms commitment to pandemic treaty negotiations



TOP PHOTO: Members of the Group for Equity pose with WHO Director General Tedros Ghebreyesus following a meeting at the sidelines of the Pandemic Treaty negotiations at the WHO Headquarters on 19 March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland. BOTTOM: Ambassador Carlos D. Sorreta (2nd from right) chairs the Ambassadorial Meeting of the Group for Equity with Director General Ghebreyesus (center).

Geneva, Switzerland, 19 March 2024 – Ambassador Carlos D. Sorreta, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva, chaired the Meeting of the Group for Equity (GFE) Ambassadors with WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to reaffirm the Group’s continued support and engagement in advancing Equity in the ongoing negotiations on a WHO Pandemic Agreement held on 19 March 2024.

The meeting was held at the sidelines of the 9th meeting of Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB9) to draft and negotiate a WHO Convention, Agreement or Other International instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (CA+) being held on 18-

28 March 2024 at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. INB9 is a two-week marathon negotiation and the last scheduled INB meeting.

“Our aim is to promote the operationalization of Equity to ensure that the Pandemic Agreement is just, fair and cognizant of the needs of developing countries,” Ambassador Sorreta said in his opening remarks. He added, “At the same time, the Group serves as an informal vehicle that helps facilitate consensus by presenting our counterparts with a platform to engage us collectively.”

WHO Director General Ghebreyesus commended the GFE for its constructive role in the INB negotiations and assured the Group of the WHO Secretariat’s particular attention to the process.

The GFE shared their perspectives on key issues and concerns on the current state of play of the negotiations. The Group for Equity is presently composed of Argentina, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Namibia, Pakistan, State of Palestine, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, and Uruguay. The Philippines delivered the first joint statement of the GFE during the 5th meeting of the INB on 12 June 2023.

As a middle-income country, the Philippines consistently echoes the call of developing countries in the WHO to uphold equity as a principle and outcome of this global pandemic accord, including in access to response products and countermeasures, primary health care capacities, and the distribution of health workforce.

In a special session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) held in December 2021, the Member States of the WHO decided to embark on a process to negotiate a legally binding international instrument to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response aimed to be adopted by the 77th WHA in May 2024. **END**