

PHL ANNOUNCES “GROUP FOR EQUITY” AT WHO PANDEMIC TREATY NEGOTIATIONS



Ambassador Evan P. Garcia announces the Group for Equity during negotiations on the Pandemic Treaty at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland on 12 June 2023, coinciding with the 125th Anniversary of Philippine Independence.

12 June 2023, Geneva, Switzerland – The Philippines, on behalf of the Group for Equity, called on all World Health Organization (WHO) Member States to demonstrate political will and commitment to achieve equity through the Pandemic Treaty at the resumed 5th Meeting and Drafting Group of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (CA+) being held in Geneva, Switzerland from 12 to 16 June 2023.

The Philippines is actively engaged in the INB negotiations on the CA+ also known as the “Pandemic Treaty.” The proposed pandemic treaty is intended to be a historic document that will help ensure that present and future generations are safe from the devastating effects of pandemics.

Delivering the statement on behalf of the Group, Ambassador Evan P. Garcia expressed full support to ensuring that the “INB process results in a WHO CA+ that is just, fair and cognizant of the circumstances faced by developing Member States.” He conveyed the Group’s firm view that this can only be achieved through concrete provisions that effectively operationalize Equity.

As the first speaker to take the floor in plenary, he also stated that the Group for Equity is prepared to work with all Member States to further strengthen the Bureau’s Text without prejudice to referencing proposals previously made when and where they are appropriate.

The Group for Equity is presently composed of developing Member States including Argentina, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania and Thailand. The Group for Equity was organized at a meeting convened by the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva on 08 June 2023 with delegations from other developing countries who are active in the INB Process on the WHO CA+.

“We are proud to contribute to this historic process by helping organize developing Member States and we hope that the Group for Equity will attract more delegations so that it may ultimately serve as a force for consensus in the negotiations”, Ambassador Garcia said. “It is fortuitous that we are able to make this announcement on the Anniversary of Philippine Independence”, he added.

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 accord, including in access to response products and countermeasures, in primary health care capacities, and in the distribution of health workforce. Protection of migrants and other vulnerable groups as well as gender equality and transparency in procurement also remain high in the Philippine agenda in the negotiations.

At a special session in December 2021, the World Health Assembly (WHA) established the INB to draft and negotiate a convention, agreement or other international instrument under the Constitution of the WHO to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The output of the INB process is intended to be The INB is mandated to submit a consensus text of an instrument to the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024.

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