

(English version)

Question for written answer E-000277/25
to the Commission
Erik Kaliňák (NI)
(22 January 2025)

Subject: Withdrawal of the USA from the WHO

On 20 January 2025, the newly elected President of the United States signed several executive orders, including one ordering the completion of the US withdrawal from the WHO ⁽¹⁾.

In contrast to this move by the US, the EU continues to support the WHO, including by planning to get Member States to commit to the amendments to the International Health Regulations annexed to Resolution WHA77.17, which were adopted on 1 June 2024, in the interests of the EU.

In the light of the foregoing:

1. Does the Commission consider it appropriate for Member States to be bound by WHO health regulations or a pandemic treaty when it is beyond doubt that these measures will not be adopted by major global actors?
2. Have experts carried out an independent impact analysis that would lead to a recommendation that the EU and its Member States continue to participate in the aforementioned WHO documents, and that would take into account the US withdrawal?
3. In the absence of such an analysis, would the Commission consider suspending actions leading to being bound by the aforementioned provisions, at least until it becomes clear whether their adoption has added value for EU citizens?

Submitted: 22.1.2025

Answer given by Mr Várhelyi on behalf of the European Commission
(9 April 2025)

1. Since their adoption in 2005, the EU and its Member States have promoted the effective implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) that aim to improve international cooperation on prevention, preparedness, surveillance, containment and response to public health emergencies.

The aim of the amendments adopted in 2024 ⁽¹⁾ is to strengthen the IHR in light of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the EU's priorities in the field of global health ⁽²⁾. As it is also explained in the explanatory memorandum to the Commission's Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to accept the amendments to the IHR, the majority of the amended provisions concern matters that have been regulated at EU level and none of the amendments are contrary to Union law. ⁽³⁾ Their implementation is therefore in the interest of the Union.

The Commission remains committed to a successful conclusion of the ongoing negotiations for a new Pandemic Agreement ⁽⁴⁾, provided that its content is in line with the Union's positions and interests as reflected in the negotiating directives ⁽⁵⁾.

2. The Commission will continue to consider all developments in the ongoing negotiations, including the implications of the announcement of the United States of America in close cooperation with the Member States, including at the Working Group on Public Health of the Council, serving as the special committee within the meaning of Article 218(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ⁽⁶⁾.
3. Without pre-judging the outcome of the ongoing negotiations for the Pandemic Agreement, the Commission will continue to act in cooperation with Member States in accordance with Council Decision (EU) 2022/451.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organisation/>

⁽¹⁾ The amendments to the IHR were adopted by the IHR States Parties at the 77th World Health Assembly with Resolution WHA 77.17 (Strengthening preparedness for and response to public health emergencies through targeted amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)).

⁽²⁾ Council conclusions of 29 January 2024 on the 'EU Global Health Strategy: Better health for all in a changing world', document ST 5908/24 and related Commission Communication COM(2022)675 of 30 November 2022.

⁽³⁾ Proposal for a Council Decision authorising Member States to accept, in the interest of the European Union, the amendments to the International Health Regulations contained in the annex to Resolution WHA77.17 and adopted on 1 June 2024 (COM(2024) 541 final).

⁽⁴⁾ Information related to the ongoing negotiations for a new Pandemic Agreement is available at: <https://inh.who.int/>

⁽⁵⁾ The Commission is negotiating the Pandemic Agreement on behalf of the European Union, for matters falling within Union competence, based on an authorisation from the Council of the European Union set out in Council Decision (EU) 2022/451 of 3 March 2022 authorising the opening of negotiations on behalf of the European Union for an international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as complementary amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) (OJ L 92, 21.3.2022, p. 1). The Commission, as the Union negotiator, is guided by the negotiating directives annexed to the decision, laying down the main objectives and principles to be achieved.

⁽⁶⁾ As per Article 2 of Council Decision (EU) 2022/451.