

Hon Andrew Little

Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for the GCSB
Minister Responsible for the NZSIS
Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations
Minister Responsible for Pike River Re-entry



Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on the Christchurch Mosques

20 June 2022

Virginia Crawford

By email: fyi-request-19413-c9de3b6c@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: ALOIA205

Tēnā koe Virginia

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) on 20 May 2022. You specifically requested:

“Could you please indicate whether the New Zealand government has agreed (or is planning to agree) to the following:

The World Health Organization (WHO) is negotiating a global pandemic treaty and considering amendments to its International Health Regulations (IHR)”.

Member States of the WHO, including New Zealand, jointly agreed to begin negotiating a new treaty (or instrument) at a special session of the World Health Assembly in November 2021. A pandemic treaty or instrument was a key recommendation of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, to help improve the global community's ability to respond to future pandemics. Please refer to the following link for information relating to the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response at: www.theindependentpanel.org/about-the-independent-panel/.

Member States drive this treaty-making process, and it is up to governments to jointly determine what actions will be required to better prevent, prepare and respond to a future pandemic. The negotiation is being taken forward through an Intergovernmental Negotiating Body or INB, open to all Member States, including New Zealand. If you are interested in learning more about the work of the INB, you can access further information at: www.who.int/newsroom/events/detail/2021/11/29/default-calendar/second-special-session-of-the-world-healthassembly.

It is important to note that negotiations remain at an early stage and the exact form of the instrument is yet to be decided. Governments will be working towards an outcome by the 77th World Health Assembly in 2024: www.who.int/about/governance/world-health-assembly. If Member States agree to proceed with a legally binding instrument (for example, a treaty), standard New Zealand treaty-making process, including a cabinet mandate and parliamentary treaty examination will be required.

I note your query regarding amendments to the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR). Ensuring the IHR remain fit for purpose and protected as a vital part of our global health architecture is a priority for New Zealand. The initial amendments you refer to were put forward by the United States in its capacity as a WHO Member State for all other Member States' consideration, earlier this year. The proposed amendments were further discussed at the 75th World Health Assembly in late May this year, under an agenda item dealing with 'public health emergencies: preparedness and response'. At the Assembly, New Zealand shared its views along with other Member States, and together they reached consensus on specific amendments to IHR 2005 Article 59.3. These were subsequently adopted by the Assembly on the basis of consensus.

You may also be interested to know that the Ministry of Health is proactively releasing joint advice produced with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade that relates to negotiations towards a new pandemic treaty or instrument in the coming weeks. This information will be published at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/general-information-releases.

I trust this fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Little". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hon Andrew Little
Minister of Health