

World Health Organization's Controversial Pandemic Treaty Fails, but Here's What's Next

World Health Organization (WHO) leaders say they were unable to reach an agreement for a controversial pandemic-related treaty that would increase the organization's emergency powers in case of another international health crisis.

Critics have warned the pandemic treaty would undermine U.S. sovereignty on important health decisions.

The failure to gain approval for the measure comes as WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus and 194 member states are wrapping up more than two years of negotiations on new rules for responding to pandemics during the May 27-June 1 World Health Assembly in Geneva.

So far, negotiators failed to produce a draft deal Friday for approval at this week's convention.

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"WHO Member States have ended intensive negotiations aimed at strengthening global capacities to respond to future pandemics and outbreaks in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and agreed to submit outcomes of their work for consideration by the upcoming World Health Assembly, starting Monday," the WHO said in a statement released Friday.

In 2021, member countries asked the WHO to oversee negotiations to determine how to best stop the spread of future viruses globally.

According to a draft treaty, the WHO would focus on closing the vaccine gap between the West and developing countries

through a “Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing System,” where countries would give the organization samples and genetic sequences of potentially dangerous pathogens, Semafor Signals reports.

In return, the WHO would provide countries with 20% of the vaccines needed.

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However, the treaty also included proposals to increase the WHO’s emergency powers and essentially give the organization full power over what other countries should do in a pandemic.

Negotiations are still ongoing for updates to existing health rules, but U.S. officials told Reuters it would be at least another one to two years of talks before a pandemic treaty is finalized.

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