



In Conversation with Priti Patnaik, Founding Editor of Geneva Health Files (GHF), on the WHO's proposed Pandemic Treaty, Global Health, and India.

Animesh Roul, Executive Director, [Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict](#), New Delhi, engaged in a conversation with Priti Patnaik, the Founding Editor of [Geneva Health Files](#) (GHF). The discussion centred around the proposed pandemic treaty and the principal challenges that lie ahead for this treaty. This includes exploring the accountability framework, considerations of human rights, and thoughts on India's potential role in the negotiation process and beyond.

ANIMESH ROUL: What are the key challenges before the proposed multilateral pandemic treaty under the World Health Organisation?

PRITI PATNAIK: Nearly three years since discussions first began, there are fundamental differences between countries on issues such as the access to countermeasures, the role of intellectual property rights during health emergencies, and the access to information on pathogens and the resulting benefits to be shared.

Countries also disagree on whether a global health treaty should incorporate the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities. They also need to come to an agreement on how to finance compliance and incentivize cooperation in the context of a pandemic treaty. Other areas of contention include getting countries to agree on surveillance measures.

ANIMESH ROUL: Is safeguarding human rights and the right to health essential for the effectiveness of the treaty regime?

PRITI PATNAIK: Yes, human rights considerations are important issues, but at the moment, it does not appear that countries would be willing to formulate concrete obligations on human rights in a global health treaty.

ANIMESH ROUL: Is the accountability framework crucial for the treaty's success? Is it possible to have a consensus on that?

PRITI PATNAIK: So far, as of August 2023, countries have yet to discuss accountability seriously in the context of a pandemic accord. There are

several proposals, and some suggested language on what accountability can look like as it stands in the Bureau's text released in May 2023. Any accountability mechanism in a pandemic treaty must also sit well with the accountability mechanism in the International Health Regulations, which are also currently under the process of amendment.

ANIMESH ROUL: How can India play a pivotal role in the treaty's implementation (especially after the relative success of COVID-19 pandemic management)?

PRITI PATNAIK: India is expected to be an important player, like other large developing countries such as Russia, China, Brazil, and Indonesia, among others. Given its manufacturing capacities and role in the supply chains, it is expected to be influential in these discussions. But whether India will provide true leadership or whether it will be guided by narrower commercial interests driven domestically will remain to be seen.

ANIMESH ROUL: What are your thoughts on the so-called 'social contract' between countries to promote equitable distribution of vaccines, medicines, and diagnostics?

PRITI PATNAIK: The success of a new pandemic accord hinges on framing obligations on equity – and this would mean not only equitable access to countermeasures but also equity considerations in financing health systems strengthening as has been the demand for both developing and developed countries. The social contract is important not only between countries but also within countries.

ANIMESH ROUL: What is your analysis of the prospects and implications of the accord concerning the pandemic?

PRITI PATNAIK: One of the most significant outcomes of these discussions could potentially be a new multilateral mechanism for access and benefit sharing tailored specifically for public health. If countries get together and agree on such provisions, it can have far-reaching implications on not only how benefits are shared but also how information on pathogens will be accessed in the context of health emergencies.

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