

Developing a new platform for equitable access to medical countermeasures in pandemics

Design & consultation process

2 February 2023

This concept note describes a WHO-convened consultative process to design a multi-disease, multi-tool, end-to-end platform for coordinating the rapid development and equitable access to medical countermeasures for pandemics and major epidemics.

A key goal of this process is to help achieve convergence of the many parallel discussions underway on enhancing access to countermeasures, with the aim of ensuring that all these efforts are working to common purpose.

The consultation process will engage a broad range of global, regional, and national stakeholders and will build on experiences and learnings from the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework (PIP) and other relevant inter-agency/international initiatives focused on epidemic-prone diseases such as Ebola (e.g. the International Coordinating Group, ICG).

Following a rapid initial prototyping phase to be completed by April 2023, the process will work towards convergence on a full working platform for launch by September 2023. It is anticipated that the platform will be further adjusted once the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) on an international pandemic accord¹ has completed its work.

In developing and proposing this process, WHO has consulted with a number of interested parties and stakeholders that are actively exploring aspects of this agenda. WHO welcomes further suggestions on how on this consultation process can be enhanced and looks forward to working with related initiatives and fora to further test and refine design options for a future platform.

Context & rationale

COVID-19 demonstrated the need for a globally integrated, end-to-end medical countermeasures platform as an integral part of a strengthened global health architecture for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR). However, as highlighted in multiple reviews of the international COVID-19 response (e.g. G20 HLIP, IPPPR, ACT-A External Evaluation), current countermeasure mechanisms are not sufficient in scope or operations for this purpose. Given the increasing frequency and impact of pandemic and major epidemic-prone pathogens, there is an urgent need to bring coherence to the current medical countermeasures landscape, which is complex and fragmented across pathogens (COVID-19, influenza, and others) and tools (i.e. vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics, and others).

¹ The [Intergovernmental Negotiating Body](#) was established by the World Health Assembly in December 2021 in a special session to draft and negotiate a WHO convention, agreement, or other international instrument under the Constitution of the World Health Assembly on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

Solutions to enhance equitable access to pandemic countermeasures are being discussed and pursued in an increasing number of international fora. It is very important that these efforts are complementary and converge towards a common purpose.

In this context, and as indicated by the WHO Director-General following the release of the External Evaluation of ACT-A, WHO is convening a broad consultative process to bring together all relevant stakeholders in the co-creation of a new, comprehensive medical countermeasures platform for future pandemics.

WHO is undertaking this process as the United Nations directing and coordinating authority for global health, with relevant experience through hosting of the ACT-A, PIP and ICG coordination mechanisms, and as custodian to the IHR (2005) and secretariat to the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body for a pandemic accord or related international instrument.

Scope & focus of the consultations

The consultation process will encompass three key issues that are essential to the design of a future medical countermeasures platform:

- **Governance** – a broad and rich ecosystem of public, private, civil society and other actors contributes to the end-to-end value chain for medical countermeasures, from research and development to rollout and delivery. The coordination and management of such a diverse ecosystem is not amenable to traditional governance mechanisms given the very different oversight arrangements, reporting lines and accountabilities of many contributing entities. This design process will develop options for governance that can facilitate transparency, inclusivity, and a coordinated agenda of work, while allowing each area to move forward at pace, maintaining agility of operations, especially for responding to emerging threats and opportunities (see Annex 1).
- **Operating model** – enhancing coordination and cooperation in this ecosystem will require clear ways of working across broad networks of actors, as well as specific roles and responsibilities to leverage the necessary technical expertise and capacities in a workable structure (see Annex 2). This structure will need to facilitate close coordination both within and across product areas and value chains. At the same time, the overall operating model will need to be highly flexible, particularly in terms of its ways of working, to ensure it can respond to changing needs and context given the dynamic nature of this ecosystem, the environment in which it is operating and the threats to which it is responding.
- **Surge financing** – accelerating the development and equitable access to medical countermeasures in times of crises poses a particular challenge to conventional public sector financing streams - whether development or humanitarian - due to the need for substantial at-risk and upfront funding on very short notice. This aspect of the design process will explore potential options for rapidly providing substantial contingent, surge financing whether through existing mechanisms, innovative solutions, or a combination of both. This will complement existing mechanisms that finance preparedness (e.g. Pandemic Fund) and will draw on lessons from innovative financing initiatives.

Principles underpinning and guiding the design and consultation process

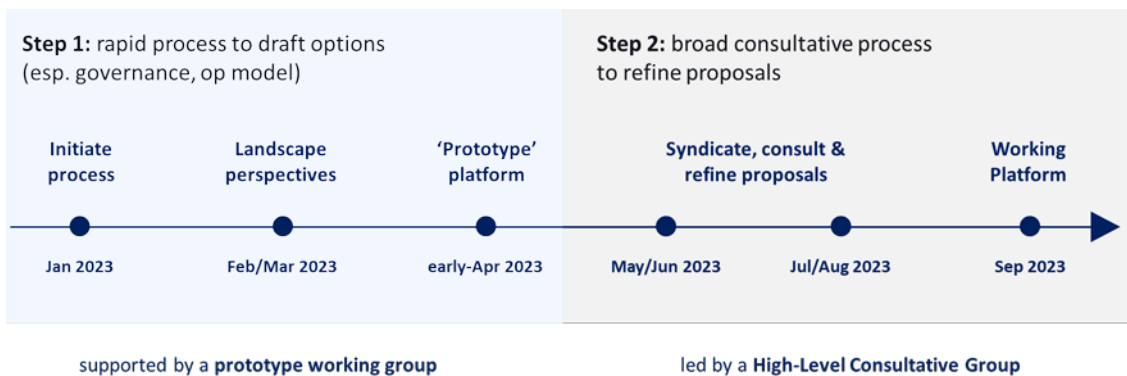
- **Speed** – a rapid, agile process is required to counter the risks of a new pandemic, increasing fragmentation of the current ecosystem, and loss of momentum as the current pandemic wanes.
- **Equity** – enhancing equitable access to countermeasures requires an ‘end-to-end’ approach for the platform, with those who it is intended to serve playing a leading role in the process.

- **Inclusivity** – engaging all key stakeholders and constituencies in this process - from those who develop the products to those who deliver them - is essential for the broad buy-in and ownership required for the platform to have its intended impact.
- **Efficiency** – leveraging learnings and good practices (e.g. from ACT-A, PIP, ICG), and working with other efforts and fora that are discussing future access to countermeasures (e.g. to test and refine design options), can both enhance and accelerate this process.

A two-step process to converge on a working platform by September 2023

During a first, rapid prototyping step, an initial proposal for the platform will be developed, with options for its governance mechanism and high-level operating model. This initial prototype proposal will then be used as the basis for a broad, high-level consultation process as outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Proposed two-step process to design the countermeasures platform



Prototype working group: this technical-level working group will develop an initial prototype platform by April 2023, with options for all major elements of the design, particularly those that will require broader consultation for alignment. This small group will be comprised of experts from agencies working in key product areas, organizations with cross-cutting expertise (e.g. scaling of manufacturing), and countries at greatest risk of inequitable access to countermeasures. The group will conduct its work through an iterative consultation process with a broader group of countries, industry, civil society organizations (CSOs) to inform initial design elements.

High-Level Consultative Group: this group - to be established by April 2023 - will be comprised of high-level officials and representatives from countries, international organizations and agencies, industry, regional entities, and civil society. It will take forward the consultations with a view towards reaching convergence on a new 'working platform' that could be launched by September 2023. The group will give particular attention to resolving open issues for which the prototype working group had proposed options.

In parallel with the prototyping work, it is expected that the G20 Joint Finance and Health Task Force (JFHTF) will explore and map potential 'surge financing' solutions for facilitating the rapid development, scale-up and equitable access to medical countermeasures in future pandemics and major epidemics with significant economic and health system consequences. To the degree possible, the work of the JFHTF will be incorporated into the deliberations of the High-Level Consultative Group.

Immediate next steps

By January 2023:

- further refine the design and consultation process based on comments on this proposal
- establish the technical working group and initiate development of the prototype and options
- establish a communications platform to promote a common understanding of the process, and to ensure transparency and timely sharing of information
- initiate technical level consultations with interested parties on the evolving proposal and options

By April 2023:

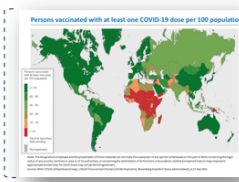
- establish a full prototype countermeasures platform, with options for key design elements requiring further consultation
- incorporate the work on financing options supported through the G20 Joint Finance & Health Task Force
- constitute the High-Level Consultative Group
- initiate the broad, high-level consultation process with stakeholders and constituencies

For comments/further information:

To provide comments on the proposed design and consultation process, and for questions or further information – including media enquiries – please write to mcpconsultation@who.int.

Annex 1. Example considerations for the design of a governance mechanism for the future countermeasures platform

- Governance mechanism should **reflect the platform’s goal**
- **LICs/LMICs have key role** in defining goal & ‘governing’
- An **investors group** could support the governance
- Need to **balance inclusivity & agility**
- Needs to allow for **agency & pillar-specific governance**



State of access to COVID-19 vaccines at end Dec 2021

The **governance set-up** will also need to consider options for:

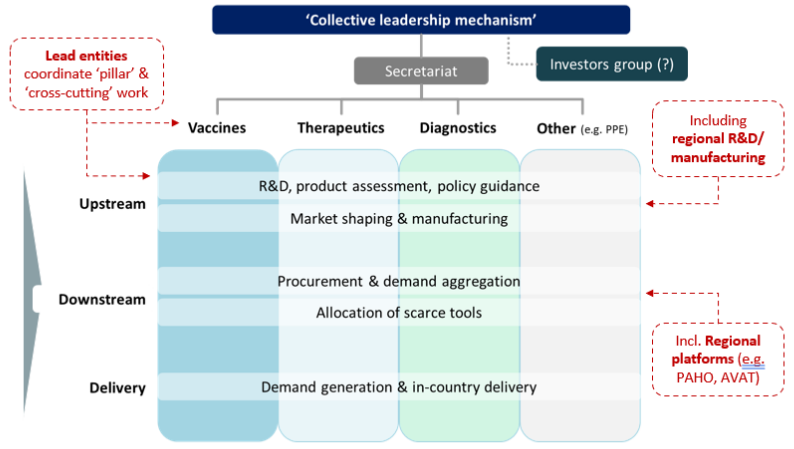
Authorities:	Info sharing	Guiding (?)	Full decision making
Participants:	Limited	Constituency-based (?)	All interested parties
Partnership models:	Informal	Semi-formal (?)	Formal

Annex 2. Example considerations for the high-level design of an operating model for the future countermeasures platform

For illustrative purposes only!

Major operating model elements:

- Structure
- Roles
- Ways of working
- Interfaces
- Capacities



Flexible, agile approach is essential for emerging threats & opportunities