

Committee: Environment

Topic: The question of fair and equitable preparation for the next global pandemic

President of the General Assembly: Raashmi Aman Niranjana

School: Royal Russell

Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic was the most recent pandemic with many flaws in the preparation for it leading to a global pandemic in which still some countries are in the process of recovering. Starting off as a social media conversation emerging from China in which it quickly became censored, the WHO couldn't declare the virus at first as a public health emergency due to insufficient evidence. Some solutions that should be considered could be strengthening global health governance and cooperation, enhancing national public health systems and preparation for them, investing in early detection of diseases, enhancing trust in public health communication, sustaining funding for preparation and many more.

Definition of Key Terms

Pandemic – “an epidemic occurring over a large area, crossing international boundaries and typically affecting a large number of people”

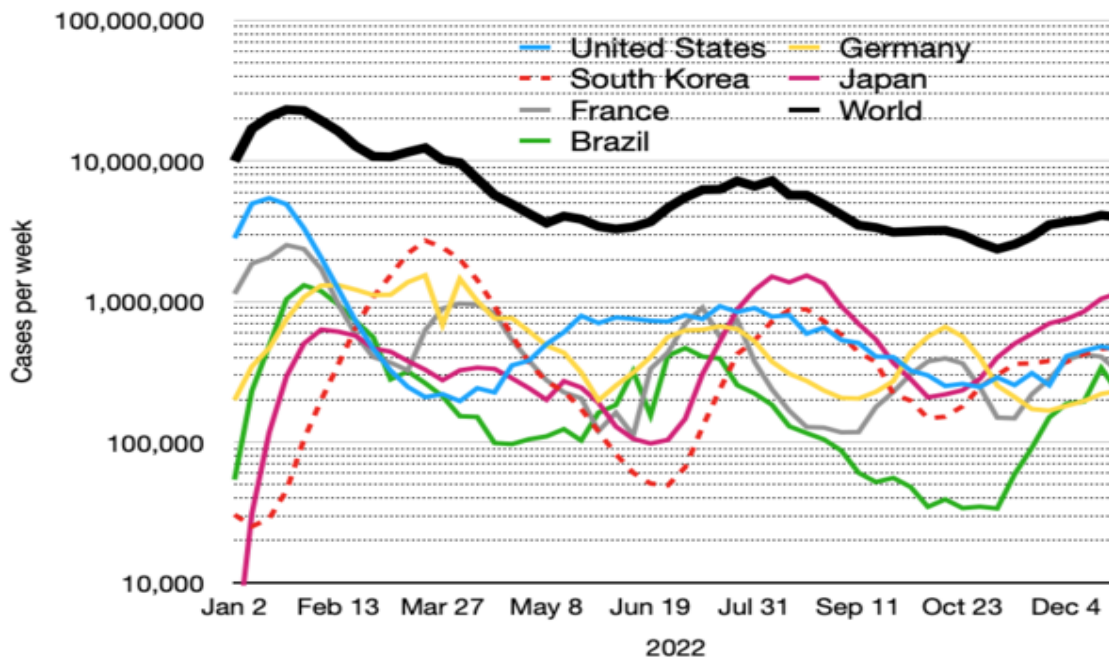
Epidemic - a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Infectious disease caused by a virus. If infected, the person will experience illness in most respiratory systems (breathing systems). Some can recover, others might become seriously ill and need more medical attention.

Background Information

The most recent global pandemic was the COVID-19 pandemic, a global situation where an outbreak of the coronavirus in Wuhan, China late December 2019 began to spread round the whole of Asia, and then the whole world in early 2020. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared in January 2020 that the outbreak was a Public Health Emergency of International

Concern (PHEIC). Two months later and the outbreak became a pandemic. In December 2021 cases still increased due to many factors one being more variants.



“Semi-log plot of weekly new cases of COVID-19 in the world and the top six countries in 2022”

It was because of the COVID-19 pandemic that the WHO’s report in 2022 emphasised the importance of stronger international collaboration and funding for preparing for another pandemic. In May 2023 the PHEIC for COVID-19 ended becoming the 5th most major pandemic worldwide. Published by the WHO in February 2020 the “Strategic preparedness and response plan” mentioned actions taken to prepare for this pandemic. It first starts with China quarantining the cities that were mainly infected and suspending the widespread transports between population centres. Issues faced includes the rumours, misconceptions and misinformation spread on social media giving negative impacts on the responses to the measures. More plans were then introduced for international recognition such as limiting human-to-human interactions and close contacts, identifying and isolating patients in need for care, counter misinformation, etc.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

United States of America – have agencies such as the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health that help with preparations to respond for a future pandemic.

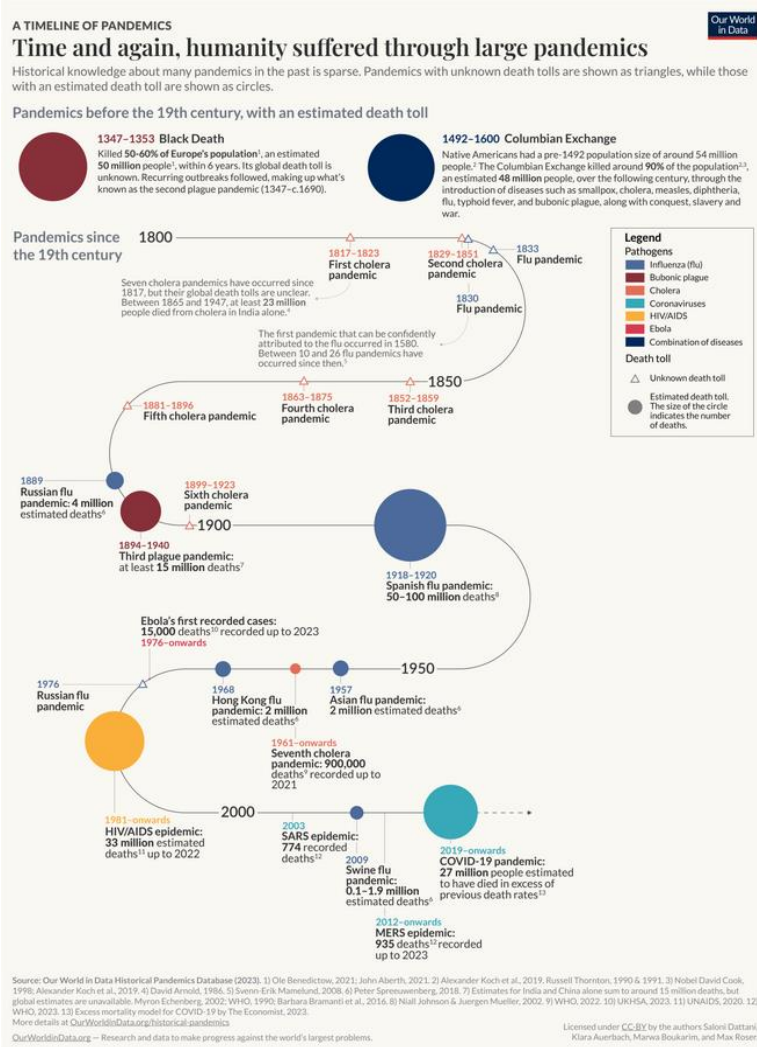
The European Centre for Disease Presentation and Control (ECDC) – help in monitoring the general cases of infectious diseases. Germany, Italy and France as well as many other European countries have invested in preparation programs, researching and stockpiling.

United Kingdom – The UK Government has invested in bio-surveillance systems as well as vaccine research, for example AstraZeneca.

The World Health Organisation – coordinates the preparedness for international pandemics, frame-working the responses for global health response.

World Bank – Launched a Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, are now planning new mechanisms to finance global pandemic preparedness and hope to work with low- and middle-income countries to strengthen their healthcare systems and supply chains.

Timeline of Events



Date:	Description:
December 12 th , 2019	Pneumonia like illness recognised, not responding to the standard treatments.
January 5 th , 2020	The WHO was informed by China that over 40 cases were recorded for the unknown illness
January 7 th , 2020	Coronavirus is identified as the cause of the outbreak
January 13 th , 2020	Thailand's first case of the virus outside of China
January 15 th , 2020	Japan's first case of the virus
January 22 nd , 2020	The WHO doesn't declare the virus a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)
January 23 rd , 2020	Wuhan, China is under lockdown due to the outbreak.

January 30th, 2020	First case of virus in United States of America
February 23rd, 2020	Italian government lockdowns the country
March 11th, 2020	After more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, the WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic
May 21st, 2020	AstraZeneca/Oxford University COVID-19 vaccine is funded by the U.S. Government for the development of the first dose to be made in September 2020
June 8th, 2020	World Bank states that the pandemic will put the global economy in a worse state than World War II.
September 28th, 2020	COVID-19 death toll reaches over 1 million within 10 months

For more detail on the COVID-19 timeline - <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html>

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

International Health Regulations (2005) - Governed by the WHO. Play critical roles during covid, guiding global response mechanisms. Is a central treaty for disease surveillance, vaccine development and response strategies for an outbreak.

Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) – Adopted in 2015. Underscore the importance of universal health coverage, resilience of health systems and pandemic preparedness.

United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) (2019) – Addressed how Universal Health Care is important to improve global health and pandemic preparedness, putting emphasis on accessible health care being essential when responding to pandemics effectively.

UN General Assembly Special Session on COVID-19 (December 2020) - A session that involved the provision of a platform for heads of state to discuss lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic and how to improve future pandemic preparedness.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

WHO Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework (2011) - an effort to prepare for influenza pandemic specifically. Aimed to improve the sharing and access to vaccines and antivirals. Helped with a foundation for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (2000) - established by WHO as a global network designed to identify and respond to health emergencies. Aims to bring technical expertise and resources for a coordinated response to outbreaks.

COVAX (COVID-19 Global Vaccine Access Facility) (2020) - Launched in response to COVID-19 pandemic. A global initiative to make sure access to vaccines were distributed fairly to the low- and middle- income countries.

Possible Solutions

Improving early warning systems and reporting the requirements for countries. When sharing data, pathogens and research finding, make sure it is clear.

Integrating the preparation for pandemics with the Universal Health Coverage strategies to make sure that health systems are resilient, so that it is accessible to everyone mainly when in times of crisis.

For the monitoring of zoonotic diseases to be identified especially those of animal-human interface such as wildlife markets, farming practices, etc.

Local leaders, NGO's and civil society organisation to have an increase of public awareness about the urge for pandemic preparedness and the efforts of responding to such situations.

Bibliography

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/covid19/2022/05/03/the-biggest-mistakes-governments-made-during-covid-and-what-the-future-could-hold/>

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-for-the-new-coronavirus>

<https://www.cdc.gov/index.html>

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/02/next-pandemic-when-could-it-be>

https://www.who.int/health-topics/international-health-regulations#tab=tab_1

<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

<https://goarn.who.int/>

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>