



## COVAX – A global Vaccine programme

“No one is safe unless everyone is safe”. COVAX is one of three pillars of the **Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator** that was launched in April 2020 by the **World Health Organization** (WHO), together with the European Commission and France. COVAX, is a global initiative aimed to ensure rapid and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries, regardless of income level with a goal of securing access to 2 billion doses of safe and effective, approved vaccines during 2021. The first ones are expected in Africa by March. On January 15<sup>th</sup>, **UN Secretary General** called for more global solidarity and full funding for the COVAX initiative. “Vaccines are reaching high income countries quickly, while the world’s poorest have none at all,” he said, calling for greater global solidarity and warning about the dangers of “vaccinationalism”.



*“Vaccines are the first great moral test before us. Vaccines are reaching a handful of countries quickly, while the poorest countries have almost none. These must be seen as global public goods – people’s vaccines – available and affordable to all. Science is succeeding – but solidarity is failing”.* UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres

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## Pandemic Preparedness and Response.

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response for the **World Health Organization**



Executive Board presented their second progress report in January. Co-chaired by a **former President** (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf) of **Liberia** and a **former Prime Minister** (Helen Clark)

of **New Zealand**, the eleven member panel developed a progress report which addressed a fourfold mandate. **(1)** to learn from previous epidemics and pandemics (*past*) **(2)** review the present in relation to the chronology of events and activities the COVID 19 pandemic, **(3)** understand the impact and **(4)** develop a vision for a strengthened international system ideally equipped for pandemic preparedness and response in the future. The most

significant message of the progress report was that the world was not prepared and must do better. “We are also convinced that the evidence of deficiencies in pandemic preparedness and response calls for far-reaching change for the future”. Their **recommendations** include the following.

- The **pandemic response has deepened inequalities** both within and between countries. Public health measures which would curb the pandemic need to be applied comprehensively.
- The **global pandemic alert system** is not fit for purpose. Critical elements of it are slow, cumbersome and indecisive. A system to distribute information from the ground up and supported by real-time data gathering and decision-making tools, is vital in order to enable reaction at the speed required to confront epidemic risk.
- **Technical updating** must be accompanied by a **political willingness** for countries to hold themselves accountable for taking all necessary actions as soon as an alert is issued.

## Climate Adaptation Summit 2021

The **Climate Adaptation Summit** took place over a 24 hour period on 25/26<sup>th</sup> January. Heads of State, global and local leaders participated virtually, focusing solely on the issue of climate adaptation and resilience. A comprehensive **Adaptation Action Agenda** was launched which set out clear commitments to deal with the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather or crop failure. with particular attention to those most vulnerable to and impacted by these climate shocks. .



**Nature based solutions** are seen to be at the heart of successful measures of adaptation to climate change. They bring benefits for people, nature and economies, promoting protection of ecosystems as well as their sustainable management and restoration. They aim to reduce climate risks and ensure human well-being as well as benefitting biodiversity. Some examples of nature-based solutions are restoring and conserving coral reefs and mangrove belts to enhance the resilience to coastal flooding and sea level rise; upsloping vegetation to reduce the risks of landslides; and creating permeable green areas to help replenish groundwater in regions facing water scarcity. It was recognized that at present their potential is not fully developed given that only a small fraction of the funding is currently allocated to implementing them.

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## Mission 1.5 People's Climate Vote



On January 27<sup>th</sup> the results of the **People's Climate Vote** – the largest survey on climate ever conducted – were published by the

UNDP and Oxford University. The poll formed one 'pillar' on which the Mission 1.5 campaign was built in 2020. The "People's Climate Vote" aimed to connect the public to policy makers; - educating people about climate change solutions and asking them about the actions that they think governments should take. The results of the largest-ever survey on climate (**1.2 million respondents**) were published in late January. They showed that there was widespread recognition of climate change as a global emergency in every one of the **50 countries** surveyed with younger people (*under 18*) more likely to say climate change is an emergency than older people. Four climate policies emerged as the most popular globally: 1. Conservation of forests and land 2. Solar, wind and renewable power 3. Climate-friendly farming techniques and 4. investing more in green businesses and jobs.

## Did you know that:

- **Natural disasters** linked to extreme weather accounted for **475,000 deaths and \$2.6 trillion** in damages over the last 2 decades.
- **One person in every three** globally is still not adequately covered by **early warning systems** for climate emergencies.
- **Just 24 hours warning** of a coming storm or heatwave can cut the ensuing damage **by 30 %**.
- The Paris Agreement included commitments to **mobilize \$100 billion US dollars a year** from private and public sources for mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. That commitment has **not been met**.
- Despite being on the frontline of climate disruption, **Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States** receive only 14 % and 2 % of climate finance

## Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

On Friday January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** entered into force, despite being strongly opposed by the world's nuclear powers. It was preceded by a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repetition of the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. **Eighty six member states** have now signed and **52** have **ratified the treaty**, making the **possession or development of nuclear weapons illegal in their territories**. The first-ever treaty to ban nuclear weapons, it is also the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty in more than two decades. Although the treaty now forms part of international law none of the 9 countries known or believed to possess nuclear weapons (*the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea*) have signed or ratified the treaty.



The **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons**, which helped to spearhead the treaty in 2017, and which won the 2017 Nobel Peace for their efforts, will now campaign for divestment in nuclear weapons. They plan to bring pressure to bear on financial institutions to stop giving capital to companies involved in the production of nuclear weapons and missiles.

➔ [Watch the short video](#)

Events were held around the world to celebrate this milestone on the path to nuclear disarmament. In New York, representatives of **ICAN, Pax Christi NY**, and various other NGO groups held a rally in front of the United Nations building and the Isaiah wall, celebrating this step on the way to nuclear disarmament. **Veronica RSHM** was happy to be able to attend it.



## 2021 – Year for the Elimination of Child Labor

A UN General Assembly Resolution passed in 2019 declared the year 2021 to be the **International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor**.

Violence against children is widespread in all societies and child labor is a form of violence against children that is targeted specifically by SDG 16.2. An estimate 152 million children are engaged in child labor, 73 million in the worst forms and many of them under the age of 8.



The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children is at the forefront of efforts to raise awareness, stimulate leadership commitment, galvanize action, and establish a standard of national violence prevention throughout the world. It was launched by UN Secretary General in 2016 and aims to strengthen efforts between UN member states to address SDG 16.2 and to eliminate violence against children by 2030. To date, 420 partner organisations are involved and 32 countries have committed to becoming **Pathfinder countries** signifying their commitment to have a National Action plan for implementation. Zambia and Zimbabwe have recently joined Mozambique and others as 'pathfinder' countries. Despite the importance of the priority, less than 0,6% of overseas direct investment (foreign aid) has been allocated for projects and programmes targeting the ending of violence against children.

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