

## **US-Japan Global Health Dialogue**

National Academy of Sciences Building  
Washington DC

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The 3<sup>rd</sup> US-Japan Global Health Dialogue brought together nearly 50 senior government officials, legislators, health experts, and leaders from international organizations to discuss what two of the world’s leading countries are doing to strengthen health security globally as well as to learn from one another’s experiences in responding to critical health challenges at home. This Track 2 meeting was co-hosted by the National Academy of Medicine (NAM), the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE). This effort followed two 2017 joint US-Japan dialogues that called for the establishment of a “US-Japan partnership on global health security.”

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare Katsunobu Kato opened the meeting with detailed statements that lauded the long history of US-Japan collaboration, featuring a wide range of joint programs and exchanges and a visible, close alignment of Japanese and US interests. To further set the context, a senior US official explained that, on the US side, the recent completion of the new US National Biodefense Strategy is a major milestone and provides an updated template for prioritizing US investments in the coming years at home and abroad.

The subsequent discussions focused on topline priorities in global health security and building more effective domestic systems in Japan and the United States. A luncheon featured a keynote by Peter Sands, the new executive director of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Later, a dinner session explored opportunities to advance the global health agenda when Japan leads the G20 in 2019.

The participants’ discussions revealed 12 areas where US and Japanese collaboration holds the greatest promise.

### **Institutionalizing health security in the global system**

- 1) Japan has taken a leadership role in supporting the establishment of the World Bank’s Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF) and the World Health Organization’s Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE), and these funds’ activation for this year’s Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has demonstrated their value as well as the need for continued critical assessment of their performance and sufficiency. Participants urged the United States and Japan to work together to mobilize new funding for these facilities, which are overly dependent on support from a small group of countries, while exploring ways to refine the trigger criteria for the PEF and improve the cost-effectiveness of the financing model by reducing premiums for its ‘insurance window.’
- 2) Both US and Japanese speakers reaffirmed that far greater efforts are needed to ensure sustained international action to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Promising new

initiatives such as the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) require continued support and careful oversight. Importantly, Secretary Azar proposed that the United States and Japan collaborate in launching a Trans-Pacific AMR Task Force.

### **Preparing for emergencies by strengthening health systems in vulnerable countries**

- 3) US and Japanese speakers each stressed the centrality of global compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR) in strengthening health security. Minister Kato noted the need for quicker detection of and reporting on emerging public health emergencies. Both countries remain essential to carrying forward the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) through to 2024, including sustainable investments in low-income partner countries' national plans to build health security capacities.
- 4) Even while lauding Japan's intellectual leadership, participants also noted that Japan's development assistance budget dedicated to global health is much lower than the United States, ranking among the bottom of all OECD member countries. It will be important into the future that the Japanese government increase the proportion of bilateral and multilateral funding that is dedicated to global health, which will also make US-Japan partnership in the field more balanced and effective.
- 5) The United States and Japan share a common objective of ensuring that, over time, partner countries commit higher levels of their own domestic funding to strengthen their health systems.

### **Advancing efforts to battle communicable diseases**

- 6) American participants praised Japan's leadership in co-facilitating the UN High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis on September 26 in New York. Several participants underscored the need for Japan and the United States to focus on tuberculosis—especially drug-resistant tuberculosis—as a priority in their global health efforts, including in agenda-setting for the G20 and G7 meetings.
- 7) Both countries continue to prioritize the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as an essential institution in controlling infectious diseases and building health security. It is credited with saving 27 million lives since its inception. It will be critically important that both countries act in concert to ensure the success of the Fund's replenishment, scheduled for the final quarter of 2019. The Abe government remains keenly committed to having Global Fund programs focus on strengthening local health systems as part of efforts to combat the three deadly diseases.

### **Collaborating on R&D and innovation to bolster global health responses**

- 8) More needs to be done to expand and better articulate incentives for private sector contributions to global health. CEPI and the Global Health Innovative Technology Fund (GHIT) are two successful initiatives that are deserving of continued support by both the US and Japanese governments.
- 9) Both countries are grappling with the challenge of responsibly managing sensitive technologies that both create new opportunities for major health gains and present high uncertainties and significant bio-risks. Gene editing and synthetic biology are a special focus.

As one speaker noted, “The speed of science is faster than the speed of policy.” There is a pressing need for intensified dialogue, both bilaterally and globally, on ways that academic institutions, private companies, government regulatory agencies, and others can set common norms and win voluntary compliance, share information and best practices, and better harmonize regulatory frameworks.

### **Sharing lessons on sustaining effective health systems**

- 10) While the US and Japanese health systems differ in important ways, there are also many areas where the two countries can benefit by exchanging lessons on best practices. The United States has taken steps to shift toward value-based care. Meanwhile Japan has a long and successful history operating a system that provides universal health coverage, but is now tested by the rapid aging of its population and so it is also working to introduce value-based care. There is much that each can learn from one another’s successes and challenges in these efforts, as well as in the ways that each country is harnessing digital technology, making more innovative use of healthcare workers, prioritizing primary care, and undertaking other measures to move toward value-based care.
- 11) In particular, both countries would benefit from more information sharing and exchanges that facilitate cross-learning on the utilization of robotics, telemedicine, AI, genomic medicine, and other technological innovations. Similarly, they can learn a great deal from model cases of how health data can be utilized to improve healthcare delivery throughout society.

### **Information sharing and cooperation on domestic challenges**

- 12) Healthy aging is a particularly rich area for US-Japan cooperation and information sharing. Participants noted that R&D on medical issues related to aging tends to be grossly underfunded—especially outside of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease—and that expanded US-Japan joint research would yield significant benefits for both countries. The NAM’s Health Longevity Grand Challenge, a new funding initiative to catalyze investment into aging research, was cited as one particularly innovative approach, and Japanese involvement in supporting this effort can be a model for US-Japan cooperation. Similarly, there is much to gain by sharing information on societal strategies to deal with the challenges of aging populations, and Japanese participants cited the Asian Health and Wellbeing Initiative (AHWIN) as a promising platform for doing this.

Participants also felt that Japan’s role as host country for the G20 in 2019 provides a valuable opportunity to advance global health efforts. Secretary Azar urged the Japanese government to prioritize the financing of global health security on the G20 agenda, and Japanese and American participants encouraged Japan to project leadership in utilizing the G20 process to focus global attention on efforts to make health systems in developing countries more resilient and sustainable.