

## US-Japan Global Health Dialogue

Washington DC

June 17, 2022

After two and a half years battling the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 50 American and Japanese officials and experts met in person at the 4<sup>th</sup> US-Japan Global Health Dialogue to identify ways that US-Japan collaboration can be leveraged to advance health security and pandemic preparedness globally. The Dialogue was organized as a Track 2 meeting in Washington DC by the US National Academy of Medicine (NAM) and the Japan Center for International Exchange (JCIE), in cooperation with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare and the US Department of Health and Human Services, and it included high-level representatives from the White House and 8 other US and Japanese agencies, the World Bank, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and nongovernmental organizations and research institutes.

The Dialogue was opened by Japan's health minister, Hon. Shigeyuki Goto, and Assistant Secretary Loyce Pace, speaking on behalf of HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra, who had fallen ill. Minister Goto emphasized Japan's hope to deepen US-Japan cooperation on universal health coverage (UHC), pandemic preparedness, and International Health Regulations (IHR) reforms, and he lauded recent moves to institutionalize bilateral ties such as the opening of the US Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC) regional office in Tokyo.

Nearly two dozen panelists then presented in discussion sessions that were structured to address five pressing questions, drawing on lessons from the COVID-19 experience.

- What should the United States and Japan do to strengthen the global health architecture?
- How can Japan and the United States cooperate on IHR reform and negotiations for a possible new pandemic accord?
- What can the United States and Japan do to advance a new pandemic preparedness fund?
- What should both countries do to realize the goals of the “100 Days Mission” to support R&D for new and emerging diseases?
- How can Japan and the United States jointly promote greater synergies between UHC and health security?

The meeting closed with a dinner discussion of NAM's [Commission for a Global Roadmap for Healthy Longevity](#) and video messages from WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and World Bank President David Malpass, who both urged Japan and the United States to deepen cooperation on pandemic preparedness, in part through leadership in establishing a new pandemic preparedness fund as a World Bank FIF [Financial Intermediary Fund].

The United States and Japan boast the first and third largest economies in the world; they are world leaders in biomedicine and health; and they share democratic values and rank among the top providers of overseas development assistance (ODA) funding and technical assistance, so it

was unsurprising that Dialogue participants repeatedly highlighted the uniquely powerful role that US-Japan cooperation can play in global health. Numerous participants also emphasized that Japan's 2023 presidency of the G7 Summit provides an important opportunity to advance pandemic preparedness measures, with some noting that this is heightened because progress in the G20 may prove more challenging in light of Russia's aggression and other geopolitical shifts. Several participants also warned that the window for action is quickly closing and called for a greater sense of urgency. They argued that the low-and middle-income countries (LMICs) that were pushed to the back of the queue in the initial response to COVID-19 have lost considerable trust in the G7 and G20 leaders and further delays in implementing and funding global reforms will make it even more difficult to elicit their support and cooperation.

With these points in mind, Dialogue participants identified a range of short-term, mid-term, and continuing priorities for US-Japan cooperation.

### **Short term (*By December 2022*)**

1. **Establishing a FIF:** Participants strongly backed the creation of a pandemic preparedness fund structured as a World Bank FIF, and they felt that it should be launched in the coming months with strong US and Japanese leadership and support. There also was consensus that, while it should be situated at the World Bank, it will need to fully engage the WHO and closely involve the major global health institutions equipped to advance pandemic preparedness, such as Gavi and the Global Fund. There were subtle differences between and among the Japanese and American participants regarding the governance of the FIF, and several remarked that the FIF should be quickly established, with some governance issues put aside to be tackled later.
2. **Global Fund replenishment:** A senior White House official noted that, in September 2022, the United States hosts the replenishment pledging conference for the Global Fund, which has played a crucial role in the COVID-19 pandemic response, and stressed that it is the strong desire of President Biden to see Japan increase its pledge to the Global Fund.

### **Medium term (*January-December 2023*)**

3. **Elevating global health on G7 agenda:** Numerous participants urged the Japan to utilize its presidency of the 2023 G7 Summit to ensure that global health is a top agenda item for the Summit and advance pandemic preparedness and response as well as other health security initiatives, especially the priorities listed below.
4. **Strengthening & expanding the FIF:** After the pandemic preparedness fund is officially launched as a FIF in 2022, as hoped, Japanese and US leadership will be needed to expand its financing, solidify its governance, and ensure it functions effectively.
  - The original ambition was for the FIF's annual budget to be at least \$10 billion, and participants acknowledged that it will take several years and sustained focus in the G7 and other forums to expand its financing to a sufficient level. Since the FIF is not a development fund, but instead aims to improve collective security, the US side pushed for greater exploration of ways to mobilize non-ODA resources for it.
  - There appears to be a need for further consultations on the FIF's governance, with Japanese officials feeling that donor countries should play a central role in decision

making, while US participants tended to argue that it is also essential to ensure substantive engagement by representatives from LMICs and civil society.

- A senior US official explained that it will be crucial to demonstrate the value of the FIF quickly in order to expand its resources and, therefore, it will be key to have it initially focus narrowly on one or two areas where it can have a major impact. They felt that the best place to start would be in investing in pandemic surveillance—not just in funding for laboratories and equipment but also in the human resources and systems needed for community event-based surveillance, etc.—and this was supported by some of the Japanese representatives as well.

5. **100 Days Mission:** Japanese and American participants felt it will be particularly important to use the 2023 G7 year to build up global capacity and international coordination mechanisms to rapidly develop diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines within 100 days of the identification of a new pandemic threat, in keeping with the 100 Days Mission proposed at the 2021 G7 Summit.

- Participants felt that special priority should be placed on expanding R&D capacity to enable rapid vaccine development, and that it is important to build out a platform to facilitate greater cooperation among agencies such as BARDA in the United States, the recently launched SCARDA in Japan, and HERA in Europe, as well with institutions such as CEPI and GHIT.
- Several participants added that one important step will be to harmonize regulatory standards for international clinical trials in order to reduce costs and avoid the delays and duplication that slowed the rollout of COVID-19 products.
- A number of participants lamented the stark inequalities that have characterized too many aspects of the COVID-19 response, helping to drive mistrust in science and government responses. One urged policymakers to make sure to build in incentives for greater equity and access for all measures related to the 100 Days Mission, which can also help counter the disinformation and low levels of trust that have bedeviled the COVID-19 response.
- Another participant added that these investments in R&D for pandemic preparedness for new pathogens should be conducted in a way that also can advance efforts to combat HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, and other longstanding health threats.

6. **Pandemic surge financing:** After referring to the WHO’s proposal to expand its Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE), one Japanese official pressed the point that we need to create a rapidly scalable fund to provide surge financing for a global pandemic response, in addition to financing preparedness and the 100 Days Mission. Others also spoke of the need to transform the ACT Accelerator into a permanent mechanism or draw lessons from it to devise another platform with similar functions, noting that this will be homework for the 2023 G7 year.

7. **Global health governance:** There was agreement that more steps need to be taken in 2023 to strengthen governance for health security although no consensus emerged on the best approach. Japanese officials spoke of a “coordination platform” similar to what the WHO has recommended, perhaps as an enhanced version of the G20 Joint Finance and Health Taskforce, noting that it could help in guiding the FIF and other initiatives. Some American

participants, meanwhile, pressed the point that it is crucial to stand up a heads-of-state forum along the lines of the Global Health Threats Council proposed by the WHO Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and endorsed by the G20 High Level Independent Panel. They also spoke about the important role of regional organizations such as the African Union in the COVID-19 response, arguing that that these regional groupings can be an effective means to channel greater representation into new governance bodies.

8. **Link UHC and health security:** US participants praised Japan's leadership on UHC and cited it as a new area for deeper US-Japan collaboration. Several urged Japan to use the G7 process to strengthen linkages between UHC and health security, in part by ensuring that new resources for pandemic preparedness are deployed in a manner that simultaneously improves primary healthcare. Measures can also be taken to ensure that as much pandemic preparedness funding as possible is channeled to country-level and community-led initiatives, as well as to improve UHC indicators to incorporate health security priorities.

### **Continuing & Long Term (*Beyond 2023*)**

9. **IHR reform & a pandemic instrument:** Japanese and US priorities on IHR reform and INB negotiations toward a new pandemic instrument are well aligned, with both emphasizing the importance of expanding and accelerating information sharing on pandemic threats, stronger measures to induce compliance, and the introduction of intermediate or graded health alerts that can provide warnings earlier than the full-scale declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Several participants urged both governments to ensure that the May 2024 target deadline to conclude negotiations is treated as a hard deadline, noting that if negotiations drag on longer they risk failure due to the US political calendar and a reduced willingness by countries to compromise as the sense of crisis fades.
10. **Incentivizing coordination:** Participants from both countries were concerned about increasing competition and fragmentation in the global health field. Several encouraged Japan and the United States to take the lead in applying consistent pressure on health security funding flows from existing and new mechanisms such as the FIF to incentivize deeper coordination among the major global health organizations.
11. **Deepening US-Japan exchanges:** Both American and Japanese participants underscored the importance of sustaining and expanding institutional and people-to-people exchanges for Japanese and American government officials and nongovernmental experts. The establishment of a CDC regional office in Tokyo, the placement of a Japanese liaison at the US Department of Health and Human Services, FDA-PMDA collaborative work, and fellowships for Japanese at the NIH were singled out for praise. In addition, a Japanese participant recommended expanding training opportunities for Japanese experts at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and elsewhere in the NIH to lay the groundwork for greater international harmonization on clinical trials. US-Japan cooperation through the Quad, including the potential to collaborate on clinical trials, was also cited as a bright spot.