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Global health and foreign policy

Letter dated 28 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to pose a serious public health risk and devastate communities and countries around the world, hindering progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his address at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, in September 2020, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, proposed to develop under the United Nations auspices an international code on voluntary commitments of States during pandemics.

The Government of Uzbekistan has been collaborating with the United Nations and its agencies, in particular, with the World Health Organization in order to contribute to the international efforts in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and in elaborating a global compact.

Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, in his letter to the President of Uzbekistan, extended his gratitude for the foresight and leadership in advancing the development of the draft international code and was impressed by the wide range of tasks set and the practical solutions offered.

In that regard, I have the honour to convey to you the draft of the international code on voluntary commitments of States during pandemics (see annex) and would appreciate it if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 131.

(Signed) Bakhtiyor **Ibragimov**
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 28 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

International code on voluntary commitments of States during pandemics

The epidemiological crisis caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exposed a wide range of global challenges in the pandemic response framework.

Given the universal nature of the threats to human health, security and well-being facing the world, international cooperation should be widely promoted in order to overcome the negative effects of pandemics.

International cooperation in global responses to pandemics should be based on the principles of unity, solidarity, openness, mutual assistance and the protection of human rights.

This international code is intended to strengthen the voluntary commitments of States and temporary restrictions for the prevention and mitigation of risks during pandemics.

States shall take the following voluntary measures during pandemics:

1. Ensure equal access to medical care in accordance with generally accepted rules and standards, equip health-care facilities, and strengthen the capacity of public health services and provide them with the necessary protection and support;
2. Foster awareness and a culture of health and hygiene among the public by ensuring openness and transparency in decision-making and instilling in citizens a sense of responsibility and an understanding of the dangers of pandemics;
3. Create safe working conditions in the workplace, ensure occupational safety, introduce flexible working and remote working arrangements, prevent discrimination in the workplace and establish minimum acceptable conditions for workers to ensure the effective operation of critical infrastructure;
4. Support employment by stimulating the economy and supporting businesses, creating additional jobs, safeguarding wages, assisting those who are unemployed or have lost their jobs, especially women and young people, and introducing short-term retraining and professional development programmes;
5. Provide social protection to the poor and vulnerable by expanding material support, delivering essential goods and services, encouraging charitable work and strengthening collaboration between public-private partnerships and volunteers;
6. Ensure food security and minimum conditions for the uninterrupted delivery of goods and the operation of food and agricultural trading centres (markets) in compliance with quarantine rules, and impose State and public controls over the pricing of essential goods (such as food, medical devices and medicines);
7. Support international trade between countries, provide additional support to the sectors and areas of the economy that suffer the most as a result of pandemics and stimulate the tourism industry by creating the conditions necessary to boost domestic and cross-border tourism;

8. Ensure access to lifelong learning by offering distance learning opportunities and creating a safe learning environment in educational institutions;

9. Prevent restrictions on basic human rights and guarantee the rights of migrant workers, migrants and refugees in host countries, including by providing material and social support to migrant workers who have lost their jobs and maintaining transport and transit corridors to allow migrant workers to return to their home countries;

10. Strengthen international cooperation and mutual assistance in: the implementation of economic and humanitarian assistance programmes; the sharing of reliable information on pandemic situations; the suspension or freezing of inter- and intra-State conflicts during pandemics; the consolidation of international efforts towards the development of vaccines; and the promotion of equitable access for all countries to vaccines and medicines.

States may submit a voluntary review to the United Nations of relevant activities carried out and results achieved as part of implementing this code.
