

UNITE GLOBAL SUMMIT 2021
REPORT

UNIT&
Global
Summit
2021

VIRTUAL | **6, 7 & 8 December**

Introduction

Over 1000 policymakers, global health advocates, and experts joined UNITE Global Summit 2021

From December 6 to 8, over 1000 elected members of parliament, government officials, policymakers, global health experts, practitioners, representatives of civil society, and activists have gathered to discuss the current and persistent challenges infectious diseases pose to people worldwide.

For three days, 110 speakers explored how COVID-19 has transformed global health and modern politics and how the international architecture could respond to current & future pandemics while serving the most vulnerable and not losing sight of other infectious diseases. The UNITE Global Summit results from cooperation and partnerships between UNITE and 20 international organizations working on different fronts related to public health. The program focused on three central pillars.

Hosted by Prof. Jeffrey Lazarus, the first day of the event had presentations on the overall topic of building back better our communities, displaying four panels with timely discussions moderated by partners from the WHO, UNAIDS, the International Aids Society, Harm Reduction International, Hepatitis Partnership for Control and Treatment, Médecins Sans Frontières, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative, FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics, Treatment Action Group, and UNITAID. Topics under discussion varied from investment and scientific progress on HIV, health, and human rights in the COVID era, Hepatitis C control and treatment, and access to innovation.

On The Second Day, the program focused on science & innovation as the hope for an equitable future. With the hosting of Eloise Todd (Pandemic Action network, Co-founder), partners from the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP), Uniting to Combat NTDs, Wellcome Trust, Harm Reduction International, the Global Drug Policy Index, Open Society Foundations, Transform Health, and the Pandemic Action Network hosted a total of four panels addressing matters regarding leadership in accelerating the response to antimicrobial resistance, building political will to end neglected tropical diseases, securing funding for harm reduction programs, and investing in digital health solutions.

The third and last day invited participants to rethink global health & multilateralism. The agenda was hosted by Katja Roll (Senior Advisor on Global Health Diplomacy at the Joep Lange Institute) and had three panel discussions moderated by GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria, UHC 2030, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the panel for a Global Public Health Convention (GPHC), AHF, IAPAC and Stop TB Partnership. Themes such as lessons learned in times of COVID-19, pandemic preparedness, and investment in health systems towards UHC marked this final day of the Summit.

The event created momentum for political leadership to not lose sight of other infectious diseases as well as to advance more sustainable, fairer, and equitable policies for all, always and everywhere

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1. Concept

UNITE Global Summit is UNITE's flagship annual event to promote political impact & momentum towards ending infectious diseases as a global health threat.

Why is the Summit important?

COVID-19 has transformed global health and modern politics. The international architecture that responds to current and future pandemics needs to be updated to serve the most vulnerable. Political leadership is the key to not losing sight of other infectious diseases as well as to advancing more sustainable, fairer, and equitable policies for all, always and everywhere. To implement more inclusive actions and solutions, the UNITE Global Summit serves as a platform for all relevant stakeholders to connect with elected members of parliament, congresses and senates who have the powers of: - Amending and creating laws; - Increasing specific budgets; - Influencing policies; - Holding national governments & international organizations accountable.

This edition of the Summit was based on three main themes:

BUILDING BACK BETTER OUR COMMUNITIES

December 2021 marked a timeline of nearly two years since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Since then, the world has faced unprecedented challenges in recovering from a deadly virus. However, many have been living with this threat for years. The global responses to HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria, Viral Hepatitis or Neglected Tropical Diseases remain a reality that needs to be addressed.

SCIENCE & INNOVATION: HOPE FOR AN EQUITABLE FUTURE

In less than a year, scientists have made it clear that we are living in the most advanced stage of our innovation. However, policymakers haven't yet fully understood the equity needed in channeling R&D, innovative health financing or digital health. The investments in this front continue to be scarce compared to the needs of the world's population.

RETHINKING GLOBAL HEALTH & MULTILATERALISM

World leaders have never been so influenced by global health as now. Seizing the momentum not only means investing in vaccine diplomacy, multilateralism or a reinforced mandate of WHO, but it also means creating new mechanisms of alert for future & current pandemics. Global Health Diplomacy renews its role in a time where global inequality is rising.

2. 2021 Summit in numbers



GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF POLICYMAKERS AT THE UNITE GLOBAL SUMMIT 2021

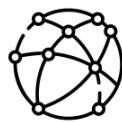


MEMBERS OF GOVERNMENT
2 in each 10 were members of government



PARLIAMENTARY NETWORKS

12



COUNTRIES

Countries with more policymakers present

	ZIMBABWE	17
	INDIA	11
	UK	8

DAY 01 | DECEMBER 6

Building Back Better Our Communities

TIME PANEL SESSION

**08:00 AM –
09:00 AM GMT****Opening Session****09:15 AM –
10:45 AM GMT****Panel Session 1:** Investing for success: scientific progress and the importance of failing forward - *Session hosted by the International Aids Society (IAS)***11:15 AM –
12:45 PM GMT****Panel Session 2:** Global Health, Democracy & Human Rights – Presentation of the Report on Emergency Powers and COVID-19 - *Session hosted by Harm Reduction International***14:00 PM –
15:30 PM GMT****Panel Session 3:** Tackling a Silent Epidemic: How can political leadership accelerate Hepatitis C control and treatment? - *Session hosted by the Hepatitis Partnership for Control and Treatment (Hepatitis C PACT) - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi); FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics; Treatment Action Group (TAG)***15:45 PM –
17:15 PM GMT****Panel Session 4:** Equitable Access to innovative tools for a safer world - *Session hosted by UNITAID*

DAY 02 | DECEMBER 7

Science & Innovation: Hope For An Equitable Future

TIME PANEL SESSION

**09:00 AM –
10:30 AM GMT****Panel Session 1:** G7 Leadership in Accelerating the Response to Antimicrobial Resistance in the Pandemic Era - *Session hosted by Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP)***10:45 AM –
12:15 PM GMT****Panel Session 2:** Building political will to end neglected tropical diseases - *Session Hosted by Uniting to Combat Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and Wellcome Trust***14:00 PM –
15:30 PM GMT****Panel Session 3:** The Global Drug Policy Index and Financing for Harm Reduction - *Session hosted by Harm Reduction International***15:45 PM –
17:15 PM GMT****Panel Session 4:** Effective legislation for sustainable digital transformation: the key role of legislators in the digital transformation of health to achieve SDG 3.8 - *Session hosted by Transform Health*

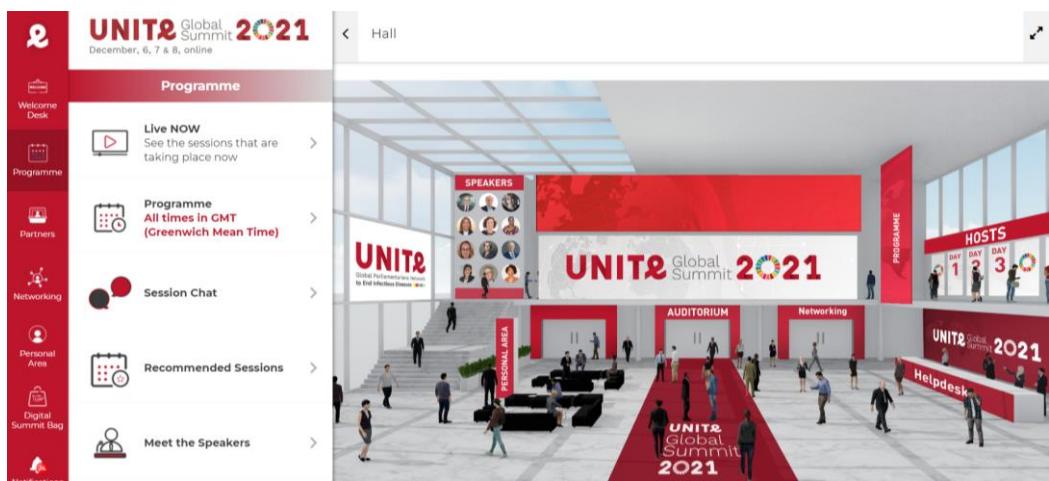
DAY 03 | DECEMBER 8

Rethinking Global Health & Multilateralism

TIME	PANEL SESSION	
09:00 AM – 10:30 AM GMT	Panel Session 1: Collaboration in the Time of Corona (Covid 19) – What Have We Learned? - <i>Session hosted by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation</i>	 Gavi The Vaccine Alliance
10:45 AM – 12:15 PM GMT	Panel Session 2: Leave No One's Health Behind: Invest in Health Systems for All - <i>Session hosted by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria & UHC2030</i>	 UHC2030 International Health Partnership
14:00 PM – 15:30 PM GMT	Panel Session 3: The Path Forward to Prevent Pandemics - <i>Session hosted by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) & Global Public Health Convention (GPHC)</i>	 THE GLOBAL FUND
15:45 PM – 17:15 PM GMT	Closing Session: A Call to Action: Parliamentary Networks and Political Leadership	 CEPI

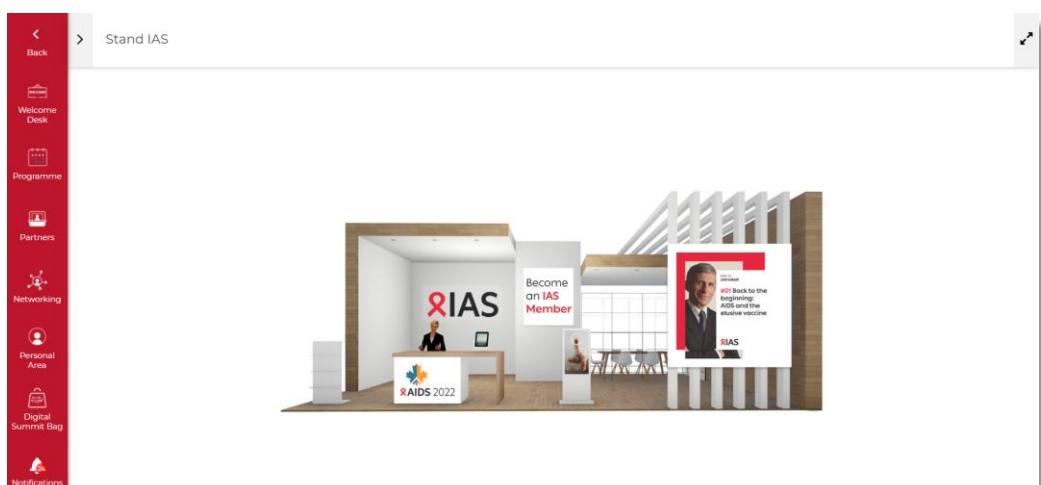
3. The Summit Platform

This edition of the UNITE Global Summit was held in an innovative platform aiming at simulating several networking and connection opportunities for attendees, comparable to an on-site experience. With full access to an interactive program and a list of the speakers, the participants were able to **share messages via chat, add favorite speakers or sessions to their agenda, and schedule meetings** between other participants or speakers. The networking section was the second one with more engagement with **more than 600 clicks during the event.**



UNITE Global Summit 2021 Platform Lobby

In the partners' dedicated section, customized virtual booths enabled the opportunity for UNITE's partners to showcase their work and materials as well as engage with the audience watching the panels. Each partner had the chance to create a tailor-made booth matching their needs.



UNITE Global Summit 2021 Platform Partner Stand

While watching the sessions, it was also possible to ask questions and share comments on the topics being discussed, creating a direct channel between attendees and speakers.

4. Summary of the sessions

Day 1 - Building Back Better our Communities

Host: **Jeffrey Lazarus**, Head of the Health Systems Research Group, IS Global; Associate Professor, University of Barcelona

Opening session: The next Pandemic, preparing for “Disease X”

Speakers:

- **Ricardo Baptista Leite**, MD, UNITE Founder & President, MP Portugal
- **Jeffrey Lazarus**, (PhD, MIH, MA), IS Global, University of Barcelona
- **Rosemary Museminali**, External and Donor Relations Director, UNAIDS
- **Marisol Touraine**, President of the Board, Unitaid
- **Evaline Kibuchi**, Chief National Coordinator, Stop TB Partnership- Kenya
- **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, Director-General, World Health Organization

Disease X represents the knowledge that a serious international pandemic could be caused by a pathogen currently unknown to cause human disease. It was first included in the WHO's list of priority pathogens in 2018. COVID-19 represents the first occurrence of Disease X since its designation was established, emerging much sooner than anticipated.

While we still respond to the current pandemic, we acknowledge that future outbreaks of Disease X are inevitable. We don't know when or where it will emerge, but we know it will. We need to be prepared for it and to accelerate our efforts in building strong and resilient health systems to ensure efficient pandemic preparedness and response in the future, realizing that “we need the full engagement of parliamentarians in this effort, to keep us safer from epidemics and pandemics.” **Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** General Director, WHO. For its second edition, UNITE has chosen to open its annual Summit asking this question: are we prepared for the next pandemic? The panel gathered renowned specialists and major public health stakeholders who gave their insight on what needs to be done to better prepare for the next outbreak.

As 2021 came to an end and vaccination is underway in most parts of the world, “*world leaders have never been so influenced by global health than now. Seizing the momentum not only means investing in vaccine diplomacy, multilateralism, or a reinforced mandate of the World Health Organization. It also means creating new mechanisms of alert for future and current pandemics.*” **Ricardo Baptista Leite**, MP, MD, UNITE UNITE Global Parliamentarians Network to End Infectious Diseases

Key outcomes:

- There is a need to address COVID-19 while making sure to continue fighting the other epidemics, creating synergies between measures taken, leading to better pandemic preparedness and response for the future.
- COVID-19 has shown gaps in the global health system that can only be solved with the engagement of all key stakeholders and in a multisectoral approach.
- Now is the right moment to create new mechanisms to prepare and respond to future pandemics, bearing in mind parliamentarians play a critical role in this joint effort.

Panel Session 1 - Investing for success: scientific progress and the importance of failing forward

Session hosted by the International Aids Society (IAS)

Speakers:

- **Birgit Poniatowski**, Executive-Director, International AIDS Society
- **Princess Kasune Zulu**, member of the National Assembly of Zambia
- **Linda-Gail Bekker**, Deputy-Director, Desmond Tutu HIV Foundation
- **Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, President, International AIDS Society
- **Andreas Lehner**, Managing Director, Swiss AIDS Federation
- **Martina Penazzato**, Paediatric lead for the HIV, Hepatitis and STIs Department, World Health Organization
- **Sharon Lewin**, President-Elect of the International AIDS Society; Inaugural Director, Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity
- **Nina Russel**, Director, HIV Prevention and Tuberculosis, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Carl W. Dieffenbach**, Director, Division of AIDS, NIH National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Over the last 40 years, substantial scientific progress has been made, and nowadays, HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence. However, HIV remains a critical global health priority, which is why it is fundamental to continue to invest in research that enables a better biological understanding of the virus and ways to suppress it, as well as in vaccines development and delivery.

The IAS-hosted panel session, entitled “Investing for success: scientific progress and the importance of failing forward”, aimed to re-affirm the importance of HIV prevention and treatment with a particular emphasis on the latest scientific evidence and continued investment that is “only useful if it is tailored considering the realities and challenges lived by our communities and key populations.” – **Adeeba Kamarulzaman**, President, International AIDS society

Key outcomes:

- There is an urgent need to increase investments in HIV research for prevention and treatment to reach the target of ending HIV/ AIDS by 2030.
- It is essential to ensure research and tailor-fit policies to the realities and challenges faced by affected communities, and it is necessary to include them systematically in the overall debate, especially at the political level.
- It is equally important to remove all critical barriers still existing, based on stigma and discrimination.

Panel Session 2 - Centering Health and Rights in the COVID-19 response: Lessons from Asia

Session hosted by Harm Reduction International

Speakers:

- **Naomi Burke-Shyne**, Executive Director at HRI
- **Fionnuala Ni Aolain**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights while Countering Terrorism
- **Ajeng Larasati**, Human Rights Lead at HRI
- **Nurul Izzah**, Member of Parliament for Permatang Pauh, Malaysia
- **Harini Amarasuriya**, Member of Parliament, Power coalition to the 9th Parliament of Sri Lanka

The rapid spread of COVID-19 “and its associated restrictive measures have had a particularly negative impact on vulnerable populations, where new policing powers, arrests and detention have exposed those already visibly poor and discriminated against to greater health risks.” **Naomi Burke-Shyne, Executive Director at HRI.** Although necessary to a degree to control and reduce infections, such centralization of powers has in some cases resulted in an overreliance on criminalization, policing, and surveillance, while side-lining best public health practice and socio-economic support. Excessively securitized responses have proven ineffective – if not counter-productive – in containing the spread of the virus, and have enabled violations of fundamental rights, with a particularly dire impact on already vulnerable and marginalized communities.

By bringing together parliamentarians, experts, and civil society, this session aimed at presenting and assessing key issues around the use of emergency powers and the adoption of securitized responses to COVID-19 as well as the role of parliamentarians and parliaments to prevent and redress the misuse of exceptional measures for political goals and promote a health-centered approach to health crises. The discussion highlighted trends in Asia.

Key outcomes

- Excessive use of emergency powers during the COVID-19 pandemic had a negative health impact on vulnerable populations and led to increased segregation and discrimination towards those populations
- Use the COVID-19 experience to create political will focused on human rights responses that can support effective public health policies.
- De-securitization of health responses approach should be consistent with the protection of fundamental rights.

Panel Session 3 - Tackling a Silent Epidemic: How can political leadership accelerate Hepatitis C control and treatment?

Session hosted by the Hepatitis Partnership for Control and Treatment (Hepatitis C PACT) - Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF); Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi); FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics; Treatment Action Group (TAG)

Speakers:

- **Leena Menghaney**, South-Asia Head and Global IP Advisor, MSF Access Campaign
- **Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah**, Director General of Health, Malaysia
- **Mariam Jashi**, Senior Policymaker, Global Health, Sustainable Development and Innovative Financing, Georgia, UNITE Board Member
- **Sergey Golovin**, Intellectual Property and Access Lead,
- **Jorge Bermudez**, Senior Professor/ Researcher and Head of the Department of Pharmaceutical Policies at the National School of Public Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz)
- **Sania Nishtar**, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Federal Minister, Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Pakistan

Controlling HCV requires increased awareness and commitment among decision-makers in Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), the roll-out of all-oral cures, the scale-up of community-based testing to find the missing millions of undiagnosed people, and concerted effort to address domestic financial challenges that prevent the launch of national programmes.

This session engaged politicians, health ministries, advocates, and other key stakeholders in an exploration of the tools and actions needed to harness countries' strategic capacity to ensure equitable access to HCV diagnosis and treatment and bring this silent epidemic to an end.

The main goals of this session were to present solutions for tackling barriers to the control, early diagnosis, and treatment of HCV and to rally parliamentarians to advocate and champion the scale-up of testing and treatment in LMICs, enabling the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals. "The global community needs to mobilize much more resources to achieve SDGs, and more specifically SDG 3." **Mariam Jashi, Senior Policymaker, Global Health, Sustainable Development and Innovative Financing, Georgia, UNITE Chapter Chair for the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region.**

Key outcomes

- Not only there is a need for more testing and treatments, but it is necessary also to develop more tailored national and regional strategies towards HCV elimination.
- The SDGs, especially SDG 3, should be a lighthouse guiding global action towards HCV elimination and delimitate the clear roadmap to follow.
- The international community plays an important role in providing the tools, knowledge, and exchange that are also necessary, to make sure no one is left behind, especially the most vulnerable ones.

Panel Session 4 - Access to Innovation in health – Building Hope for an Equitable Future

Session hosted by UNITAID

Speakers:

- **Philippe Duneton**, Executive Director at Unitaid
- **Gisela Scaglia**, UNITE Chapter Chair, Latin America & The Caribbean
- **Robert Matiru**, Programme Management – Unitaid
- **François Bompart**, Chair of the DNDi Access Committee
- **Maureen Murenga**, Alternate Board Member representing communities living with the diseases
- **Amar Patnaik**, Member of Parliament, India and UNITE Chapter Chair, India
- **Janet Ginnard**, Strategy Director - Unitaid
- **Emma Hannay**, Chief Access Officer at FIND
- **Amanda Banda**, ACT-A Civil Society Representative for the Health System Connector
- **Mauricio Cysne**, Director, external relations and communications

This session was divided into two different panels, the first one addressing critical health barriers for the most vulnerable, innovative tools to address health emergencies, the need to build resilient health systems and support universal health coverage; and the second one focusing on the solutions and challenges for COVID-19 Therapeutics & Diagnostics as well as lessons learned for the future.

The discussion was shaped around the lessons learned on the Therapeutic pillar of the ACT-Accelerator, and the importance of broader collaboration as “covid-19 made people realize that there is a need to install a technical cooperation among countries, to ensure the innovation we develop to reach the communities that need them and promote positive change.” **Philippe Duneton, Executive Director at Unitaid.**

Furthermore, another topic of discussion was the development and deployment of new tools that can inform future pandemic preparedness and on how to address critical pandemic needs in reinforcing health systems for UHC. According to **Maureen Murenga, Alternate Board Member Representing communities living with the diseases**, society wants “a UHC that is universally understood, rights-based, innovative and efficient. Most importantly, we want a UHC that is domestically financed, for it is critical for their sustainability.”

Key outcomes

- The attention should be focused on the most vulnerable ones, putting the effort to not only develop new therapeutics and diagnostics but also to make sure the scientific advances reach the ones that need them the most.
- Countries should recognize the importance and value of community-led monitoring and use the evidence and experience of communities to improve systems and services.
- As investments in innovation for COVID-19 response or other infectious diseases increase, it is important to anticipate how those investments can complement each other and contribute to strengthening overall global health responses.

Day 2 - Science & Innovation: Hope for an Equitable Future

Host: Eloise Todd, Co-Founder of Pandemic Action Network

Panel Session 1 - G7 Leadership in Accelerating the Response to Antimicrobial Resistance in the Pandemic Era

Session hosted by the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP)

Speakers:

- **Claire Doole**, Founder and Director of Claire Doole Communications
- **Laura Piddock**, Scientific Director GARDP
- **Lisa Cameron**, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom
- **Andrew Ullmann**, Member of Parliament, Germany
- **Inoue Hajime**, Assistant Minister for Global Health and Welfare, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan
- **Renu Swarup**, Department of Biotechnology Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India

While tackling the COVID-19 pandemic is an urgent global health priority, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) continues to threaten the world as a silent pandemic. “Every year, drug-resistant infections are responsible for 700,000 deaths worldwide.” **Laura Piddock, Scientific Director GARDP.**

Last June, G7 Ministers of Health and Finance committed to confronting the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance with meaningful and concrete actions, with commitments to foster new antibiotic development – through international and cross-sectoral collaboration, appropriate provisions for stewardship, diversity, and security of supply chains, expanded global access and environmental protection in responsible manufacturing and disposal.

During this session, GARDP, together with parliamentarians aimed to discuss global trends and perspectives in addressing the silent pandemic of antibiotic resistance; share lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, and call on governments to counter the spread of drug resistance because “given the struggles the world has had, we have seen how important it is to make sure there is a coordinated approach, internationally, focusing on the health of our nations, engaging the public from the bottom up, and closely linking them with our political leaders.” **Lisa Cameron, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom**

Building on this it is fundamental to take urgent action to address the growing threat of drug-resistant infections and stress the key role parliamentarians can play in the development of, and access to, new antibiotics by turning plans into action and making a case for investment.

Key outcomes

- Investment in scientific research will be crucial to help us tackle resistant infections. Antibiotics are a critical tool in pandemic preparedness and should be part of our priorities in terms of R&D
- The most vulnerable to antibiotic resistance are newborn babies and children. Yet, those are continually neglected in the funding to develop new treatments.

- Drug resistance is also an economic problem as it hurts economic growth. By 2050, drug resistance could result in countries losing more than 5% of their GDP and pushing 28 million people into poverty. Working on solutions to solve this matter is also to save funds that can be applied to save lives.

Panel Session 2 -Building political will to end neglected tropical diseases

Session hosted by Uniting to Combat NTDs & Wellcome Trust

Speakers:

- **Ade Adefeko**, Vice President, Corporate & Government Relations, Olam Nigeria
- **Menan Deosaran**, IDEA - Teacher from Trinidad and Tobago
- **Gautam Biswas**, Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, WHO
- **Mwele Malecela**, Director of the Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, WHO
- **Jeremy Lefroy**, Uniting to Combat NTDs Ambassador
- Senator **Stan Kutzer**, Canada,
- Senator **Mercy Chebeni**, Kenya
- **Neema Lugangira, Member** of Parliament, Tanzania
- **Georg Kippels**, Member of Parliament, Germany
- **Antonio Rosario Niquice**, Member of Parliament, Mozambique
- **Theo Clarke**, Member of Parliament, UK
- **Tamar Ghosh**, Chief Executive, The Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
- **Prof. Ymkje Stienstra**, Professor of Medicine, tropical and poverty-related infectious diseases, University of Groningen
- **Isabela Ribeiro**, Head Dynamic Portfolio Unit, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi)
- **John Amuasi**, Executive Director, African Research Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ARNTDs)

This session focused on three opportunities to engage parliamentarians in efforts to end neglected tropical diseases which pose a serious and preventable threat to global health systems as “leading to permanent side effects and disabilities even though most of these communicable tropical diseases are treatable and preventable”, **Gautam Biswas, Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, WHO**.

The discussion also revolved around the road map for action developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) sharing goals, opportunities, and priorities for action.

Uniting to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases shared key successes of the London Declaration on NTDs - a ground-breaking declaration that galvanized donor countries, philanthropists, private sector companies, non-governmental organizations, academia, and research organizations to come together and commit to prioritizing NTDs, and introduced the Kigali Declaration on NTDs - a high-level political declaration which will build on the London Declaration and go further by putting country ownership, integration, and cross-sectoral collaboration front and center, ensuring the long-term sustainability of those programmes.

Lastly, panelists discussed the translation of research into policy and practice bearing in mind that “we have to commit MPs to discuss this silent pandemic, seizing the momentum created by the current covid-19 pandemic.” **Senator Stan Kutcher, Canada**

Key outcomes

- Neglected tropical diseases represent a serious threat in many areas and should be dealt with as a priority in terms of the overall global health response.
- Although 40 countries have currently eliminated at least one tropical neglected disease we still have a long path before eliminating NTDs at a global level and achieving the SDGs.
- Enhancing the loss of funds and resources due to NTDs may bring the spotlight for the cause and raise awareness on the perks of mobilizing resources to fight this threat.

Panel Session 3 - The Global Drug Policy Index and Financing for Harm Reduction

Session hosted by Harm Reduction International

Speakers:

- **Colleen Daniels**, Deputy Director, Harm Reduction International
- **Beatrix Vaz**, Youth RISE/UNITE
- **Catherine Cook**, Sustainable Financing Lead, Harm Reduction International
- **Mariam Jashi**, Senior Policymaker, Global Health, Sustainable Development and Innovative Financing, UNITE Board Member, Georgia
- **Fiona Patten**, Victorian Legislative Council, Australia
- **James Agalga**, Member of Parliament, Ghana
- **Sveinung Stensland**, Member of Parliament, Norway
- **Beatriz Gomes Dias**, Member of Parliament in Portugal, Member of the Lisbon City Council

Evidence and experience show that adopting a pragmatic public health-based approach can reduce infections such as HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C, as well as reduce mortality among people who use drugs. Thus, legislative reform of drug policies under the scope of a health-based approach is an essential step to save lives and prevent infectious diseases.

The pandemic provides an opportunity to reconsider the legal architecture of drug reform, policing, and harm reduction services. Rather than returning to the status quo, states/parliamentarians/political actors should envision and invest in new policies in service to life, liberty, and human rights, also making sure that “we promote participation and involve people who use drugs in the policymaking.”

Beatriz Gomes Dias, Member of Parliament in Portugal, Member of the Lisbon City Council

In this session, the Harm Reduction Consortium launched the first-ever Global Drug Policy Index 2021 (GDPI) – a project assessing 30 countries based on data from more than 60 indicators related to drug policy, and implementation across five dimensions – use of extreme sentencing, the proportionality of criminal justice responses, health and harm reduction, the availability of controlled medicines, and alternative development – while also exploring key issues such as civil society engagement, decriminalization, the proportionality of sentencing, and funding taking in account that “Resource needs are not being met in the majority of countries. There is a lack of sustainable funding for harm reduction in the majority of countries included in the index.”

Catherine Cook, Sustainable Financing Lead, Harm Reduction International.

Key outcomes

- Data collection done by governments often doesn't take into account the human rights aspect of the situation, as they are often more focused on the goal of creating a drug-free world.
- There is a lack of sustainable funding for harm reduction in the majority of countries included in the index.
- The index shows that it is now possible to hold governments accountable for their drug policies, based on reliable data.

Panel Session 4 – Effective legislation for sustainable digital transformation: the key role of legislators in the digital transformation of health to achieve SDG 3.8

Session hosted by Transform Health

Speakers:

- **Juan de Dios Cincunegui**, Professor of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Austral University, Argentina
- **Frank Smith**, Deputy Director and Campaign Lead at Transform Health
- **Gisela Scaglia**, Member of Parliament, Argentina
- **Njide Ndile**, PharmAccess Country Director for Nigeria
- **Fadi Alame**, Member of Parliament, Lebanon
- **Christoph Benn**, Joep Lange Institute

Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for health systems to provide essential health services for all, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable communities. However, digital technologies are not a panacea. When implemented without necessary checks and balances, they risk exacerbating health inequalities and increasing digital divides.

Parliamentarians and legislators have a critical role to play in creating the right environment for the digital transformation of health systems. It is essential to make sure that parliamentarians are oriented accordingly when it comes to IT. “COVID-19 produced an opportunity for that because it forced us parliamentarians to use technology.” **Fadi Alame, Member of the Parliament, Lebanon**, as well as the effective and equitable use of data to achieve UHC as “we believe UHC will be achieved by 2030 by harnessing digital technology and the use of data in line with our core principles. Equity, empowerment, rights, inclusion and partnerships.” **Frank Smith, Deputy Director and Campaign Lead at Transform Health**. Efforts to ensure effective legislation, sustainable resource mobilization, and focused leadership are necessary preconditions to enable inclusive and sustainable digital transformation of health systems. UHC and realizing the right to health is ultimately a political choice.

This session hosted by Transform Health had the purpose of discussing and agreeing on the role of legislators in the digital transformation of health systems to achieve UHC and broad areas that legislators need to address to ensure the sustainable and scalable digital transformation of health systems. Also, the need to identify practical steps that will ensure greater dialogue collaboration and support between technical expertise and legislators and effective and sustainable programme design, and the development of effective and enabling legislation that protects individual rights.

Key outcomes

- There is a need for a global framework raising health data as a global public good whilst protecting human rights and equity
- Individuals and organizations should work together to ensure people are able to control their own data and achieve better health outcomes for themselves and their communities.
- Legislators should have the tools to make sure that they have the proper literacy to discuss matters of health in the digital era.

Day 3 – Rethinking Global Health & Multilateralism

Host: Katja Roll, Senior Advisor Global Health Diplomacy, Joep Lange Institute

Panel Session 1 - Collaboration in the Time of Corona – What Have We Learned?

Session hosted by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Speakers

- **Magdalena Robert**, Deputy Director, Program Advocacy and Communications, Polio & Vaccine Delivery, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao**, Managing Director, Gavi
- **Sveinung Stensland**, Member of Parliament, Norway
- **Sabina Chege**, Member of Parliament, Kenya
- **Dought Ndiweni**, Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe

At an early stage during this pandemic, it quickly became apparent that to end this global crisis there is a need for not only COVID-19 vaccines but also to ensure that everyone in the world has access to them. “If vaccines reached all countries equally in and between countries, we would have been able to control the pandemic more effectively and probably we would not have new variants threatening us right now.”

Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao, Managing Director, Gavi. This triggered global leaders to call for a solution that would accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines, as well as diagnostics and treatments, and guarantee rapid, fair, and equitable access to them for people in all countries. COVAX is the result of an extraordinary and unique global collaboration, with more than two-thirds of the world engaged – COVAX has the world’s largest and most diverse portfolio of COVID-19 vaccines, and as such represents the world’s best hope of bringing the acute phase of this pandemic to a swift end.

Almost a year and a half after it was launched, has this unique global collaboration achieved what it set out to do, notably to ensure that the most vulnerable, no matter where they are born, have access to COVID-19 vaccines? This debate looks at the political angle of this question, bringing together Members of Parliament from Nordic countries and East African countries to get national and international perspectives on the issue, and to explore what lessons were learned.

The debate aimed to discuss this question whilst looking at the political implications inherent in the fight against COVID-19.

Key outcomes

- To overcome this pandemic, it is essential to establish strategies to assure equitable access to vaccines.
- Collaboration between all the relevant stakeholders, from community-led organizations to policymakers and scientific organizations, is fundamental to make sure to be more prepared to respond to pandemics threats in the future.
- Organizations and institutions should also be focused on making sure that they have accessible and effective communication to prevent the spread of the ‘virus’ of disinformation.

Panel Session 2 – Leave No One’s Health Behind: Invest in Health Systems for All

Session hosted by The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria & UHC2030

Speakers

- **Rob Yates**, Centre on Global Health Security at Chatham House
- **Gabriela Cuevas Barrón**, Co-chair, UHC2030
- **Keizo Takemi**, Political Advisor, UHC2030
- **Scott Boule**, Senior Specialist for Parliamentary Affairs, Global Fund
- **Ramya Ananthakrishnan**, Director of REACH
- **Marie Rose Nguini-Effa**, President, African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (FPA)
- **Habibe Millat**, Member of Parliament, Bangladesh
- **Ibtissame Azzaoui**, Member of Parliament, Morocco
- **Given Katuta**, Member of Parliament, Zambia

Health system strengthening with a focus on equity, resilience, and sustainability is the foundation for defeating today's infectious diseases, preparing for, and responding to future pandemics. "The pandemic has underscored political, social and economic risk and widened health inequalities within and between countries. We cannot afford to wait. Action requires strong political will." **Gabriela Cuevas Barrón, Co-chair, UHC2030.** It is also crucial for progress towards UHC that truly no one is left behind.

In this context, UHC2030 and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria organized a joint session during the UNITE Global Summit 2021 on the crucial role parliamentarians can play to support the implementation of UHC and of stronger, more equitable health systems that can combat existing and future pandemics on a global, regional and national level, bearing in mind the lessons learned with this pandemic. "We've learned quite a bit during COVID, there's a real opportunity now to integrate services better and more effectively tackle multiple pathogens at once going forward." **Scott Boule, Senior Specialist for Parliamentary Affairs, Global Fund**

Key outcomes

- Existing funding is not going to be enough to cover needs going forward for pandemic preparedness and response, more is going to be needed.
- In order to ensure Universal Health Coverage by 2030, parliamentarians and society have to be accountable and engaged in the discussion acknowledging that COVID-19 set us back in our goals.
- Political will, when it's combined with global commitment, and community leadership all working together, can turn the shift of UHC from concept to implementation.

Panel session 3 – The Path Forward to Prevent Pandemics

Session hosted by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) & Panel for a Global Public Health Convention (PGPHC)

Speakers:

- **Steven Hoffman**, Director, Global Strategy Lab, York University, Canada
- **Barbara M. Stocking**, Chair, Panel for a Global Public Health Convention
- **Steven Solomon**, Principal Legal Officer, WHO
- **John Arne Røttingen**, Ambassador for Global Health at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- **John Dramani Mahama**, Former President of Ghana, Former Vice-President, Minister of Communications and Member of Parliament, Ghana
- **Elen Høeg**, Senior Policy Manager, CEPI
- **Raj Long**, Deputy Director at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the planet. “We don't quite understand that pandemics are not like other health hazards. They are really different in that the virus actually acts itself and you don't know what it is going to do and how things will play out.” **Barbara M. Stocking, Chair, Panel for a Global Public Health Convention.** In 2021, world leaders repeatedly expressed their concerns about the fate of modern global health. On the heels of the Special Session of the World Health Assembly, this panel meets to discuss whether the path that has been laid out at the highest level is sufficient to address the major issues of global public health in the 21st century.

That being said, this session focused on presenting an overview of what has been decided at the Special Session of the World Health Assembly and what the path forward is, as regards preventing pandemics and investing in ground-breaking R&D. “We're taking quantum leaps in vaccine technology at unprecedented speed and reducing vaccine development timelines from the regular 10 to 15 years to less than a year.” **Elen Høeg, Senior Policy Manager, CEPI.** It was also possible to discuss the integrated role of R&D in the future epidemic preparedness and response ecosystem, and the related need for political leadership strengthened governance and sustainable financing.

Lastly, this moment had the objective to engage delegates on how to move towards an effective global public health architecture that can effectively prevent another pandemic from taking place, including the role of parliamentarians.

Key outcomes

- Pandemic preparedness is not just a health-related matter and for that reason it should be addressed as an intersectoral approach.
- The technological tools to transform our approach to preparedness and response are available at this moment, now there is a need for the right level of global ambition, supported by political will and funding to secure collaboration and coordination of the necessary R&D, both in the interim epidemic periods and during outbreak response to the benefit of all.
- Parliamentarians play a pivotal role in being the ambassadors of the need to have proper pandemic preparedness because they are close to their communities and are the ones having the power to legislate at a national and regional level.

Closing Session: The road for recovery: multilateralism at the centre of Pandemic Preparedness and Response”

Speakers

- **Juan de Dios Cincunegui**, Professor of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Austral University, Argentina
- **David Wilson**, Program Director in the Health Nutrition and Population Practice, World Bank
- **Ricardo Baptista Leite**, MD, Member of Parliament, Portugal, UNITE Founder & President
- **Liam Byrne**, Chair of Parliamentary Network on WB & IMF
- **Jorge Saavedra**, Executive Director, Aids Healthcare Foundation
- **Esther Passaris**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for Eastern & Southern Africa
- **Akua Sena Dansua**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for Western & Central Africa
- **Gisela Scaglia**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for Latin America and the Caribbeans
- **Ibtissame Azzaoui**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for the Middle East and North of Africa
- **Mariam Jashi**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for Eastern European and Central Asia
- **Pia Cayeatano**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for the Asia Pacific
- **Amar Patnaik**, UNITE’s Regional Chair for India
- **Katja Roll**, Senior Advisor Global Health Diplomacy, Joep Lange Institute
- **Lucica Ditiu**, Executive Director, Stop TB Partnership
- **Philippe Duneton**, Executive Director UNITAID

The closing session of this edition was divided into three parts. The first one focused on a call to action for parliamentary networks, with the signature of the International Forum on Global Health Joint Declaration, the founding document of the working group. “The working group of the International Forum on global health brings together parliamentarians from different regional and global parliamentary networks gathered under a common global health and economic agenda.” **Ricardo Baptista Leite, MD, Member of Parliament, Portugal, UNITE Founder & President**

The second part of the closing session was the occasion for the UNITE Global Board, to present its work and different efforts worldwide in 2021. The last part of closing civil society and communities at the center of global health multilateralism. The importance of placing equity, innovation, and access at the center of pandemic preparedness and response. “As much love and sympathy and empathy any of us here have, as much as we try to understand, we will never be able to really understand and as much as we try to put ourselves in the shoes of those that have vulnerabilities and sick with diseases, we will never be able to put the interventions that are really needed by those that are in this situation.” **Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director, Stop TB Partnership**

Key outcomes

- The International Forum on global health will be a key working group in order to foster collaboration on pressing and challenging issues, such as pandemic preparedness, global health security, resource mobilization, research and development and universal health care.
- It is important to have parliamentarians as allies in advocating for novel tools for global health, to working with governments on stronger houses response, pressing governments to invest more in health and development, providing oversight of the government's commitment to global health access.

- The voices of civil society and community partners are absolutely critical for designing effective products that meet the needs of the people and to make sure no one is left behind.

5. The 2022 Summit

COVID-19 has demonstrated us the need to better prepare for global health threats, in particular infectious diseases, as they pose a serious risk to the health and social conditions of citizens. It is our role as an organization to promote a solid platform to discuss global health in a holistic approach making sure parliamentarians have the right tools in hand to act as ambassadors for the elimination of infectious diseases as global threats by 2030.

To accomplish that, the next edition of the Summit aspires to:

Bring parliamentarians to the forefront of discussion

Ensure to keep parliamentarians engaged with the most recent data and information, helping them to advocate for evidence-based policies towards infectious disease elimination by 2030.

Create the momentum by bringing worldwide actors together

The 2021 Summit gathered participants from more than 100 countries. The next edition will aspire to increase this representation and collect a variety of testimonies, coming together for a global response to infectious diseases elimination.

Create an impulse for political action

The Summit cannot just be a moment of discussion but a place where roadmaps for change are developed and launched. As this year has shown with the signature of the International Forum on Global Health Joint Declaration, the Summit aims to have a strong declaration which will influence the present and future work of UNITE's network of parliamentarians. We are committed to achieving political impact, and the next edition of the Summit will be an important tool to achieve it.