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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by United Nations Association of China, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 January 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Protection of the Right to Life and Health in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The United Nations Association of China(UNA-China) is focusing on the study of the impact of COVID-19 on human rights, in particular the right to life and the right to health. Recently, we held meetings and discussed with the national and international experts and scholars on *Protection of the Right to Life and Health in the context of COVID-19 Pandemic*, including prevention and control concept and measures, vaccines and the virus origins tracing. Participants shared the views that COVID-19 is posing severe challenge to the right to life and health, and vaccine nationalism and immunization gap are hampering global efforts to fight the pandemic. They called for the international community to strengthen solidarity and cooperation so as to come through the trying times. We hope that our views will be taken into account when the subject is discussed at the 49th HRC.

I. Setbacks of international response to the COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has lasted for over 2 years. There is no sign to end so far. The pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge to mankind and gravely threaten people's lives and health. According to the statistics from WHO, as of January 25, 2022, over 350 million people have been infected and more than 5.6 million have passed away around the world.

- Severe disruption from political and irrational factors. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, stigmatization and politicization have been interfering with the international response, and the world has failed to form a synergy. Politicians and media in some countries incite racial discrimination and xenophobia, and deliberately create division and confrontation.
- Imbalanced access to the vaccines in different countries. Vaccination is powerful weapon against COVID-19. However, globally, there are still such outstanding problems as insufficient vaccine production capacity, inequitable distribution and uneven vaccination, which directly hamper the worldwide efforts to prevent and control the pandemic.
- Scapegoating others in disregard of facts and science. The so-called virus origins tracing led by the United States of America intelligence community is ridiculous and contrary to scientific spirit. These acts expose narrow nationalism and irresponsibility for people's lives and health, and violate human rights.

II. Recommendations to protect the right to life and health

At present, the most urgent task is to end COVID-19 as soon as possible. With a fast-spreading pandemic, no one is safe, unless everyone is safe. Countries should not divide but unite, not blame each other but work together, not confront but cooperate. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed in the Our Common Agenda report, when we all face the same threat, cooperation and solidarity are the only solutions within societies and between nations. COVID-19 is a common enemy of mankind, we need to fight it together with a vision of building a global community of health for all.

1. The responsibility of the international community. Strong confidence and cooperation represent the only right way to defeat the pandemic. Holding each other back or shifting blame would only cause needless delay in response and distract us from the overall objective. Countries need to strengthen international cooperation against COVID-19, carry out active cooperation on research and development of medicines, jointly build multiple lines of defense against the coronavirus, and speed up efforts to build a global community of health for all. Of particular importance is to fully leverage vaccines as a powerful weapon, ensure their equitable distribution, quicken vaccination and close the global immunization gap, so as to truly safeguard people's lives, health and livelihoods.

2. Uphold the people-centred principle. Put the people and life first, and protect the life, value and dignity of every individual. We should uphold a scientific spirit, attitude and approach to coordinate regular and targeted epidemic prevention and control with emergency response, and coordinated epidemic prevention and control with economic and social development, aiming to minimizing the risk of cross-border spread of the virus. Governments should fight COVID-19 in an active manner, protect the rights of vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled, and ensure that everyone is treated equally. Politicians in some countries are passive in epidemic prevention and control in the pretext of co-existence with the virus, which goes against the spirit of science and completely ignores people's fundamental right to life and health.
3. Respect facts and trust science. The virus origins tracing is not a political issue but a scientific one. The politicization of the origins tracing by the United States of America seriously undermine global cooperation in response to COVID-19, which has weakened the confidence of the international community to overcome it. The joint research between China and WHO has played a good role in the virus origins tracing in many countries and provided a scientific guide to better understand the virus. We need to uphold a scientific-based approach to tracing origins, which should be jointly conducted by scientists and medical experts around the world to draw scientific conclusion based on facts and evidence.
4. Ensure COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good. All people in the world should have equal and fair access to vaccines, especially those in vulnerable or poor countries. Some developed countries monopolize and overstock vaccines. The global immunization gap is becoming more and more serious. Targets of the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility for poor countries are far from being met. Irresponsible unblocking of some rich countries with high vaccination rates will pose a serious threat to countries with low vaccination rates and scarce medical resources. Vaccine nationalism is extremely harmful and undermines global efforts to fight the pandemic, which should be firmly rejected by the international community. It is unacceptable for pharmaceutical companies to put their interests above the people's lives and health. Vaccines should be recognized as a global public good. Developed countries should honor their responsibilities in making vaccines more accessible and affordable in developing countries, the least developed countries in particular. Developed countries should support COVAX with concrete actions by providing more vaccines.
5. Ensure multilateralism fully implemented in fighting COVID-19. The world is facing combined impacts of changes unseen in a century and the COVID-19 pandemic. Multilateralism is the only right way to tackle global common challenges. The pandemic has put multilateralism to a severe test. Disunity, division and politicization have plagued the international community since the outbreak of COVID-19. We must improve global governance and practice true multilateralism, safeguard the international system with the United Nations at its core and reject any form of small circles or zero-sum game. The response to the pandemic is like a mirror reflecting the attitude of countries towards people's lives and health. As the virus is still spreading and mutating, the international community should firmly safeguard multilateralism, strengthen to study pathogenic cause of the virus and its variation strains, the spread of the virus force, the severe disease rate and the mortality. It is not advisable to rush to recover economy regardless of the spread of the virus. We must limit the virus as much as possible in the smallest transmission range, protect vulnerable groups and respect everyone's life and health.

III. The effectiveness of China's approach in response to COVID-19

China has established an effective prevention and control system and achieved visible results. These practices have been widely recognized by international scientists. China's good practices that can be learned are as follows:

- Make full use of big data and modern technology to carry out targeted prevention and control, when there are still sporadic small outbreaks;
 - Take regular and emergency prevention and control measures, which are necessary, effective and responsible for all countries, considering that the global herd immunity barrier cannot be fully established in the short term;
 - Reach consensus on the concept of targeted prevention and control and take an active and responsible attitude towards it, if the pandemic is to be brought under control at an early date.
 - Support and participate in global scientific virus origins tracing, but firmly oppose any form of political manipulation;
 - Uphold equitable access to vaccines and strengthen international cooperation. China has already sent over two billion doses of vaccines to more than 120 countries and international organizations. Still, China will provide another one billion doses to African countries, including 600 million doses as donation, and will also donate 150 million doses to ASEAN countries.
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