

FARIDA AL HOSANI

Official Spokesperson for Health sector of the United Arab Emirates

Michel Kazatchkine, Special Advisor to the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, Senior Fellow at the Global Health Centre of the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva

I will now turn to you, Dr Farida, with a perspective from the Emirates and the region.

Farida Al Hosani

Thank you. We are having a really interesting and important discussion regarding the global governance and being more prepared for pandemics. I think there is a lot to be done and there are six main priority areas we need to focus on, starting with the leadership commitment. I see that the global conversation to revise the governance structure is really going on, but it is slower compared to the risk of having a new global pandemic, which exists for all of us at a global level but also at regional level. I think the EMRO region is very unique in terms of its structure, with a wide disparity of economics, major insecurity and political instability in some regions, which really increase the risks of outbreaks, as well as the risk of any future pandemics.

In terms of leadership commitment, I see the Covid-19 pandemic as a very interesting lesson to the political leadership across the world because of the huge impact not only on health but also economies and political systems across the world. However, we need to realize that some of the challenges we face are really constraints for the global community to work together in a collaborative approach. For example, we could see vaccine nationalism that prevented us from getting good access to different vaccinations. In terms of the global governance systems, we need to think about what the priorities are that we need to focus on and having strong healthcare systems is one of the critical issues. We know and understand that there are fragile healthcare systems in certain countries and regions, but we cannot really afford to let those systems affect global health security in terms of emerging new diseases. That means we need to work together to strengthen those healthcare systems to the minimum requirements in terms of disease surveillance, access to care and vaccination.

I think my colleagues covered vaccination very comprehensively, but I would like to add to that the access to immunotherapies, which have really been a gamechanger during Covid-19. However, we could see that immune therapies are not affordable because high prices were a real issue for many countries, so it was limited to certain countries that could afford it. Thinking about global governance and preparedness, I think immune therapies should be part of the priority areas for the discussions, in addition to vaccinations, because they are easier in terms of manufacturing and faster in terms of mobilization, as well as effectiveness for high-risk groups. Immunotherapies are really a very important part of the discussion.

Talking about innovation and research is very important because we should not stop in terms of accelerating research. Time was critical during Covid and our governance in terms of research approvals and prioritizations are really very slow and do not match the global needs. We need to talk collectively about how we can best revise the governance systems and our research regulations to accelerate research and align our research priorities with the risks we have in terms of global health security to the world.

The last point I would like to cover is related to surveillance and I believe that historically we have really worked closely as international governments to define surveillance requirements across the globe. However, I think our surveillance needs to be more revised to be more comprehensive. We had a lot of disease-based surveillance systems that are really well-defined by the global community, but they do not cover all the risks we have. We need to do a risk assessment in terms of what the potential risks are in a future pandemic and how we can enhance our surveillance systems to be more comprehensive, more integrated and more adaptive towards the new technologies, to support our preparedness in the future.

Michel Kazatchkine

Thank you for bringing up the issue of research. We are talking about the decentralization and regionalization of manufacturing capacity but obviously, research is an essential component.