

HARUKA SAKAMOTO

Primary care physician and Senior Fellow at the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research

Michel Kazatchkine, Special Advisor to the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe

With this, let us move to our next speaker. Our next speaker is Haruka Sakamoto, who is a Senior Fellow at the Tokyo Foundation for Policy Research, and she has been tightly involved in the work of the G7 Health and the G7 in preparation for the Hiroshima Summit this year.

I must say that, to us in the global health community, achievements in the declarations of the Health G7 and of the G7 have been remarkable in the tense climate of negotiations that we currently face. Haruka, thank you.

Haruka Sakamoto

Thank you very much for inviting me today.

Japan hosted the G7 Summit this year in Hiroshima and pandemic preparedness was one of the major topics at the G7 this year.

However, in 2016, when Japan hosted the last G7 Summit, pandemic preparedness was also a main topic. At that time, there was an Ebola virus outbreak in the West African countries and a significant amount of discussions have taken place on how we can prepare for the future pandemics.

Since then, many efforts have been made to prevent another pandemic. However, as we already know, we could not prevent Covid 19.

In this backdrop, the Japanese government again picked up pandemic preparedness as one of the key topics at the G7, with a specific focus on governance, financing and global rule-making.

Firstly, it is about governance. I think this is not only an issue for the health sectors, but if any kind of global crisis happens, such as climate change, energy crisis or the recent Gaza situation, who or which country or which organization will take the leadership role is a really difficult question.

I think this is the same in the health sector. If a pandemic of a global scale happens, which country or which organization or who takes the leadership role is a really big issue.

Of course, we have the WHO. However, as Michel has just mentioned, now global pandemics or global health is not only the issues within the health sector, but this is intertwined with

several other sectors. In this regard, which organization, which country or who will take the leadership role is a really big issue in the governance.

The Japanese government picked up the governance of the pandemic preparedness as one of the key points of this year's Summit. Of course, we have the WHO, where Health Ministers across the globe gather and discuss the technical aspects of the pandemic preparedness.

However, this year's G7 also highlighted the importance of having a higher level Head of State deliver a dialogue platform on which Heads of State for each country discuss not only the impact on the health sectors, but also the effects of the pandemic on other sectors, such as trade or economy.

My next point is about financing. We need money in order to prevent the spread of viruses. However, the question is who will make a financial contribution to the global pandemic? Especially like Covid 19, many high-income countries are also largely affected by Covid 19, and those countries were not at their full capacity to financially support low- and middle-income countries. In that case, who or which country will make a financial contribution to a global scale?

G20, not G7, took a leadership role and created the new financing mechanisms called the Pandemic Fund. The basic idea of the Pandemic Fund is asking the donor countries to make a financial contribution to the Pandemic Fund. G7 this year also highlighted the importance of the Pandemic Fund and actually financially contributed to the Pandemic Fund, showing their support to the Pandemic Fund.

However, since the Lehman shock, the money coming from the G7 countries or traditional donor countries has stagnated. Then, when a global pandemic scale happens, the money coming from those traditional donors is not adequate at all. We really need to mobilize resources, as in G7 countries, including the private sector oil market. There is still an ongoing debate on how we can mobilize the money from the private sector oil market, and we really need to consider such financial mechanisms.

The third one is about the global rule-making, and Michel already explained in detail about the Pandemic Treaty. I think this is not an easy roadmap to agree upon in the Pandemic Treaty because there are so many conflicting interests among countries.

However, again, this year at G7, I think G7 are countries with a shared value and showing their support for the Pandemic Treaty is sending a political message that we need to unite in order to prevent future pandemics.

I would also like to highlight the importance of the innovation of pharmaceuticals. When the next pandemic happens, if we can create vaccines more quickly, we can save more lives, which is good. Of course, innovation is key for future pandemics.

At the same time, there are many challenges and concerns regarding the innovation for pharmaceuticals. The first one is the supply chain risks. The second one is technological transfer together with intellectual property rights issues, and the third one is equitable access and delivery.

On supply chain risks, most pharmaceuticals largely rely on China for their ingredients or original materials. No country, not even the United States, can complete the supply chain of pharmaceuticals without China, which is now recognized as a kind of a security risk. Therefore, now, we are considering how we can secure or diversify the supply chain as one issue.

The second point is the technological transfer. Even if we succeed in vaccination research and development, we need several million vaccinations. However, usually a country does not have such manufacturing capabilities. Therefore, whenever a global pandemic happens, we need to collaborate with a country which has the manufacturing capacity on a large scale, such as China, India, South Africa, or several other countries.

However, rapidly transferring the new technology is always a concern, especially together with the intellectual property rights. Therefore, we also need to enhance the capacity at a global scale. Together, we need to consider how we transfer those technologies in a timely manner, and we also need to consider how we deal with the intellectual property rights, especially during the pandemic.

Lastly, about equitable access and delivery of the vaccines, I think that this point has already been echoed by the other panelists. However, equitable access was a very key issue during Covid 19. Many high-income countries bought a huge amount of vaccines, whilst the low-income countries had no access to vaccinations. Therefore, we also need to decide how we secure the equitable access and delivery of those medical countermeasures.

Lastly, I would like to touch upon the relationship between climate change and health, which has already been mentioned by the Assistant Health Minister.

The health sector also emits a significant amount of CO₂. If the health sector is a country, the total amount of emissions of CO₂ is the fourth largest in the world.

During Covid 19, thanks to the vaccinations, we could save many lives. However, at the same time, there was a huge amount of medical waste, putting a significant burden on the environment.

Before, the health sector only concentrated on saving lives, anyway. However, now, the health sector has also recognized that it is also related to climate change, which means we need to prepare for future pandemics. We need to promote innovation for pharmaceuticals and we need to attain equitable access of pharmaceuticals while decreasing green gas emissions. We need to attain Net Zero emissions in the health sector.

Let us think. Is it really possible to deliver the vaccines in every part of every country with no green gas emissions? This is a really tough question that we need to consider.

In conclusion, to answer the question of today, 'Are we ready for a future pandemic?', I think it is a no, and we need to learn the lessons from Covid 19. Also, now, we need to think about the climate change perspective whenever we do something for future pandemics.

Thank you.

**Michel Kazatchkine**

Thank you very much, Haruka, and thank you to Japan for emphasizing so strongly equity in the G7, and also in New York. I heard Minister Takimi speak and equity was always at the forefront of his interventions.