# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 568**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 06)**

**Mr N V Xaba (ANC) to ask the Minister of Health: [128] [Question submitted for oral reply now placed for written reply because it is in excess of quota (Rule 137(8))]:**

Whether, with regard to the devastating health and socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Republic has been party to any international treaties on pandemics apart from the COVAX Facility that the Republic is part of; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what gaps have been identified for strengthening? **NW630E**

**REPLY:**

The Republic has participated in several multilateral platforms dealing with Pandemic  
Preparedness, Prevention and Response (PPPR). These platforms include the  
Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) Facilitation Council, the World Health  
Organisation-led International Health Regulations (IHR)(2005) review processes, and  
the World Health Organisation-led Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) that will  
consider the envisaged international pandemic treaty that is still to be negotiated.  
The ACT-A Facilitation Council (FC) was launched in April 2020 and established in  
September 2020 to facilitate the work of the ACT-A partnership and was Co-Chaired  
by South Africa and Norway are the Co-Chairs of the FC. The ACT-A was established  
to enable an effective and equitable global response to the COVID-19 pandemic and  
was established at a time of urgency and uncertainty – less than three months after  
the World Health Organisation (WHO) determined that the outbreak of the 2019 novel  
coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on  
January 30, 2020. It brought together governments, scientists, businesses, civil  
society, and philanthropists and global health organizations such as the World Health  
Organisation (WHO), the World Bank, the Global Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates  
Foundation, CEPI, FIND, Gavi, Unitaid, and Wellcome.

The ACT-A was responsible for mobilising Medical Countermeasures (MCMs) as tools  
that were deployed for interventions and treatments used to prevent or mitigate the  
effects of a pandemic or other public health emergency of international concern such as  
vaccines, therapies, medical devices, tests and other diagnostic tools, and personal  
protective equipment. The ACT-A Facilitation Council commissioned an independent  
external evaluation. The evaluation Report assessed 24 evaluation questions across six  
areas namely: 1. Mandate; 2. Set-up and structure; 3. Resource mobilization and  
financing; 4. Achievements; 5. Gaps and missed opportunities; and 6. Way forward. The  
evaluation Report was published on 10 October 2022.

https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/external-evaluation-of-the-access-to-covid-19-  
tools-accelerator-%28act-a%29.

South Africa is also participating in the IHR-2005 review process through the Bureau  
of the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005)  
coordinated by the WHO. The review process is still in the early stages. Member  
States and relevant stakeholders have been invited to express their general views on the proposed amendments, including on Article 2 “Purpose and scope” and Article 3  
“Principles” of the IHR. Member states will in future be invited to identify areas where  
there may be convergence and also the opposite, and to identify any priorities for  
addressing the amendments including on areas of potential overlap with the work of  
the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB). The Director-General of the WHO will  
communicate the package of targeted amendments before the opening of the  
Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly as per Article 55(2) of the IHR.  
In addition, South Africa is participating in the intergovernmental negotiating body  
(INB) consists of WHO Member States and which is Co-Chaired by South Africa and  
Netherlands. The INB is involved in the discussion of the Pandemic Instrument. The  
deliberations are currently still at the stage of the conceptualisation of a Zero Draft  
framework. The Zero Draft document is a framework and outline of the envisaged  
pandemic instrument that looks at background, methodology and approach to be used  
during the development of the negotiation tool. The negotiations have not yet  
commenced but South Africa is participated in discussions focussing on the  
development of the Conceptual Draft Document. The proposed accord would take the  
lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and use them to prepare better in the  
areas of Pandemic Preparedness, Prevention and Response (PPPR). The issue of  
equity has been identified as one of the key principles that must be considered in future  
deliberations of the new accord. Negotiations on the instrument will only commence in  
the latter part of 2023.

END.