Even with the present global priority on responding to COVID-19, it is not too soon to consider how to strengthen global governance to prevent future health crises. As WHO and the international community begin to look towards the future, we encourage the Director-General and member states to place a Framework Convention on Global Health (FCGH) as a new, core feature of that governance.

The FCGH would be a global treaty with the mission of accountability to right to health, aimed at national and domestic health equity. In its detailed framework on the right to health and the mechanisms it offers, it would empower health ministries and governments to advance the right to health, and populations to claim it. The right to health is necessary to achieve global health security. Countries and the world will not be protected against public health threats such as novel and emerging infections if any part of the population, however poor and marginalized, is neglected, just as no country is safe unless all countries are safe.

The FCGH would advance health equity, accountability, and participation meaning, for instance, pandemic planning and responses that encompass the needs of all populations. The treaty would resource the right to health, with a domestic and global health financing framework for funding robust, responsive public health systems, including laboratories, surveillance, and other centerpieces of health security. And the FCGH would encompass all sectors and actors, nationally and globally. This would, for example, address such risks to the right to health and health security as animal markets, and ensure that intellectual property rights never impede access to affordable vaccines and therapies.

We urge WHO and member states, when attention turns to recovering better, to include the FCGH as an integral part of the global health architecture.

18 May 2020