



#WHA79 | ARE WE READY FOR THE NEXT PANDEMIC THREAT?

Biographies of Speakers

19 May 2026

Auditorium Ivan Pictet, Geneva Graduate Institute, Maison de la paix

Vinh-Kim Nguyen

Co-Director, Global Health Centre and Professor, Anthropology and Sociology, Geneva Graduate Institute



Vinh-Kim Nguyen is a medical anthropologist and family physician from Montreal who also practices in the Canadian Arctic. He has worked in acute care settings in hospitals in Geneva and Paris and during humanitarian crises in the DRC and Guinea (during Ebola outbreaks) and in Yemen (during the ongoing conflict). He led the development and opening of covid treatment units in hospitals in Geneva and Montreal in 2020. As a result, he has a broad experience in pandemic management.

Nguyen's award-winning first book examines the introduction of antiretroviral therapy in West Africa and his second, co-authored with Margaret Lock, is a landmark treatise on the anthropology of biomedicine. He has recently led research projects examining how conflict drives antimicrobial resistance and, most recently, the financialisation of pharmaceuticals.

Trained in psychedelic therapy, his latest research examines the “psychedelic renaissance” in Switzerland and beyond.

The Rt. Hon. Helen Clark

Former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Co-Chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response



The Right Honourable Helen Clark was Prime Minister of New Zealand for three successive terms from 1999–2008. Throughout her tenure as Prime Minister and as a Member of Parliament over 27 years, Helen Clark engaged widely in policy development and advocacy across the international, economic, social, environmental, and cultural spheres. She advocated strongly for New Zealand's comprehensive programme on sustainability and for tackling the problems of climate change. She was an active leader of her country's foreign relations, engaging in a wide range of international issues.

In April 2009, Helen Clark became Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She was the first woman to lead the organisation, and served two terms there. At the same time, she was also Chair of the United Nations Development Group, a committee consisting of all UN funds, programmes, agencies, and departments

working on development issues. As Administrator, she led UNDP to be ranked the most transparent global development organisation. She completed her tenure in 2017.

Helen Clark came to the role of Prime Minister after an extensive parliamentary and ministerial career. Prior to being elected to the New Zealand Parliament in 1981, Helen Clark taught in the Political Studies Department of the University of Auckland, from which she earlier graduated with her BA and MA (Hons) degrees.

Helen Clark continues to be a strong voice for sustainable development, climate action, gender equality and women's leadership, peace and justice, and action on pressing global health issues. She Chairs the Board of GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance. She became a member of The Elders in September 2023. In July 2020, she was appointed by the Director-General of the World Health Organization to Co-Chair The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and continues to Co-Chair the Independent Panel today. She chairs the boards of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and other public good organisations and initiatives and is a board member of others.

Hanan Al Kuwari

Advisor to the Prime Minister for Public Health Affairs, State of Qatar



Appointed as Advisor to the Prime Minister for Public Health Affairs in November 2024, HE Dr. Hanan Al Kuwari served as the Minister of Public Health for the State of Qatar from 2016 to 2024.

Her Excellency was also Managing Director of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) from 2007 to 2024, leading Qatar's largest public health provider for 17 years. Under her leadership HMC transformed into an integrated academic health system, composed of 17 hospitals and centres employing 31,000 health workers, achieving numerous international accreditations and awards.

During her 8-year tenure as Minister of Public Health, she launched and executed numerous national health strategies, chaired the National Covid-19 Committee leading the State of Qatar's successful Covid-19 pandemic response and oversaw the country's medical services readiness for hosting a safe FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 at the tail end of the pandemic.

She currently co-chairs the Joint Advisory Board of Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar (WCMC-Q) and is a member of Sidra Medicine's Board of Governors, Board of the Qatar Precision Health Institute (QPHI) as well as the Steering Committee for the World

Innovation Summit for Health. She is also a member of Qatar University's Board of Regents.

At the global health level, HE Dr. Hanan Al Kuwari is currently a member of the World Health Organization's Executive Board and was Chair from 2023-2024 during which time she helped finalize the General Programme of Work 2025-2028 (GPW14) that was approved at the 77th World Health Assembly in May 2024 and as part of WHO reform programs sought to increase transparency at the election of the Regional Directors. She was also until recently the Chair of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Committee from 2024-2025. Currently she is the Vice Chair of the Bureau for the Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) on the WHO Pandemic Agreement.

HE Dr. Al Kuwari holds a PhD in Healthcare Management from Brunel University in the UK in 2002. She has published academic papers and received several awards in recognition of her achievements in the health care industry. In 2018, she was elected as a member of the National Academy of Medicine in recognition of outstanding contributions to the field of health and in 2022 was awarded the WHO Director General's Health Champions award in recognition of outstanding action and advocacy in global health promotion and security. Recently in 2024, HE Dr. Al Kuwari was honoured with the Best Minister Award at the World Governments Summit for her transformative leadership in public health and long record of accomplishments that align closely with the award's focus areas of socio-economic impact, innovation, resilience, future-readiness, good governance and integrity.

Olla Shideed

Unit Head, Health Emergencies Governance, WHO Health Emergencies Preparedness and Response Programme



Dr Olla Shideed is Unit Head, Health Emergencies Governance and IHR in the WHO Health Emergencies Preparedness and Response Programme since February 2025, and technical lead of WHO Secretariat to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the WHO Pandemic Agreement, and former Intergovernmental Negotiating Body, since January 2022. She worked closely with the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (May 2022 – May 2024). In this role, Olla also supports IHR implementation as well as WHO's contribution to the United Nations General Assembly High-level meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response. She joined the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, in December 2019, serving as executive officer for Emergency Preparedness Division, coordinating technical work and providing senior level strategic advice to the Assistant Director-General and senior management.

Dr Shideed has over seventeen years of experience in public health at the international level, joining WHO in 2009. In 2014, working in the Regional Director's office, where she coordinated the cross-cutting technical work of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, establishing a regional program on essential public health functions and an initiative for global health diplomacy that brought together senior officials from Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, and parliamentarians to discuss priority global health issues. In 2018, she moved to Headquarters, first in Health Metrics and Measurement Division and then office of the Director General.

Dr Shideed is a dentist by training, with a Master's degree in epidemiology and population health.

Edem Adzogenu

CEO, AfroChampions; Co-Chair, Pandemic Fund External Advisory Council; Global Emissary, Accra Reset



Dr. Edem Adzogenu is an international expert in investment facilitation, government affairs, and crisis management, with extensive experience advising global investors, governments, and institutions across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America. His work spans the public, private, and civic sectors, with a strong focus on innovation, economic development, pan-African integration, and social transformation.

He is the co-founder and CEO of AfroChampions, a leading public-private partnership platform that works closely with the African Union and regional institutions to advance Africa's economic integration and transformation. Under his leadership, AfroChampions has become a key actor in promoting the role of the African private sector in continental development and in supporting innovative policy and financing frameworks.

Dr. Adzogenu played a central role in the development and adoption of the landmark "Trillion Dollar Private Sector AfCFTA Investment & Financing Framework," endorsed by African Heads of State at the African Union Summit in February 2020. The initiative aims to mobilize up to one trillion dollars in investments for AfCFTA-accelerated cross-border projects across Africa by 2030.

He currently serves as Global Emissary of the Accra Reset, a Head-of-State–anchored initiative launched by the President of Ghana, H.E. John Mahama, on the sidelines of the 80th United Nations General Assembly. The Accra Reset addresses the challenge of "practical sovereignty" faced by many countries, particularly in the Global South, linked to dependence on external financing, limited influence in global decision-making, and constraints in implementing long-term national priorities. Rather than rejecting global

cooperation, it seeks to reset its terms by strengthening national agency, coordination, and accountability, with a focus on actionable outcomes in areas such as health, climate, financing, and digital transformation.

In the global health space, Dr. Adzogenu serves as Co-Chair of the Pandemic Fund External Advisory Council, contributing to efforts to strengthen investment in pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. He is a member of the governing council of the Africa Public Health Foundation. He has also served as Senior Advisor for Innovation and Digitalization at the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

Mariângela Simão

Secretary of Health and Environmental Surveillance, Ministry of Health, Brazil



Mariângela Batista Galvão Simão is the current Secretary of Health and Environmental Surveillance at the Ministry of Health of Brazil.

A medical doctor with degrees in Paediatrics and Public Health, she has worked in Brazil's public health system since 1982, from the primary health care level to a series of managerial positions throughout the years. As a public health professional, at municipal, state and national levels, she played an active role in the decentralisation of the national health system, acquiring an extensive experience in health system strengthening. She also holds a master's degree in

Public Health from the University of London, United Kingdom. She served as Deputy Director-General of the World Health Organization for Access to Drugs, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals and as Director of Community Support, Social Justice and Inclusion at the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

At the Ministry of Health, she has also previously served as Director of the National Department of STDs, AIDS and Viral Hepatitis from 2006 to 2010, when she was also a member of the UNITAID Governing Council. She has experience in the areas of public health policy, health surveillance and access to medicines.

Els Torreele

Senior Expert in Health Equity, Advisor to The Independent Panel



Dr Els Torreele is a global health equity and medical innovation expert, working to re-think the global pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing ecosystem to prioritise people's health needs and ensure equitable access to knowledge and technologies where and when needed. Recently, she has been working as an independent researcher and advisor with global health and justice advocates such as members of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and as a Visiting Policy Fellow at the Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, University College London. She is the Founding Director of æqua, a Think Space on Equity and Economic Justice for Health. For

over 20 years Els Torreele combined scientific research, pharmaceutical R&D, policy analysis and research, and advocacy at Brussels University, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), among others. She has (co-)authored over 50 international journal publications including in The Lancet, BMJ, Nature, and Vaccines, and is a regular contributor to the scientific and societal debate around medical innovation and equitable access through international conferences, media and social media.

Maria Guevara

International Medical Secretary, Médecins Sans Frontières



Dr. Maria Guevara is the current International Medical Secretary for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Doctors Without Borders. Previous to this, she was the Senior Advisor on Global Health from 2018 to 2020 and Senior Coordinator for Attacks on Healthcare from 2017 to 2018. From 2012 to 2017, she held the position of MSF Regional Humanitarian Representative in Asia, during which time she served as a member of the Advisory Group on Reform of WHO's Work in Outbreaks and Emergencies with Health and Humanitarian Consequences in 2015. She is also a SAFE STEPS First Aid Ambassador for a collaborative pan-Asia program to promote awareness and increase knowledge of first aid skills across the region. Her recent

nominative appointments include being a member of the WHO led Independent Allocation of Vaccines Group (IAVG) and Advisory Group of Sunway Centre for Planetary Health.

Her work in the humanitarian sector began with MSF in Liberia in 2004. Since then, she has held field roles in Guatemala, Haiti, DRC, Nigeria, Myanmar, Philippines, Indonesia,

Malaysia, South Sudan, USA for COVID, and recently in Chad, in both emergency and stable settings.

In her role as International Medical Secretary, she serves as a key member of the MSF International, in a trio with the Secretary General and the International President, working to promote medical leadership, advise and ensure accountability for defined medical priorities and innovation and operational strategies across the movement, as much as provide key direction and input on positioning and representation.

Dr. Guevara was trained in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at the University of Florida in Gainesville and holds a Diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene/DTMH from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and a Master of Science/MSc in Global Health Policy from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Her special interests are Global Health, Response in Emergencies and Planetary Health.

Moderators:

Ebere Okereke

Associate Fellow of Chatham House



Dr. Ebere Okereke is a physician and global public health leader with more than 30 years of experience across Africa, the UK, and international institutions. She is Global Health Adviser to the Director General at the Mohamed bin Zayed Foundation for Humanity. She has won awards for her work promoting women and under-represented groups in public health leadership.

Dr. Okereke has held pivotal roles in esteemed organisations, including Public Health England (now UKHSA), Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and Africa Public Health Foundation, where she was CEO. She was also Chief Program Officer at Reaching the Last Mile, and an Honorary Senior Adviser at the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), during which she co-led the creation of the Partnerships for African Vaccines Manufacturing.

Her contributions to the world of academic medicine have been honoured by the British Medical Association, which recognized her as an outstanding role model for women in academic medicine. She received an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine for services to global health.

Dr Okereke is a graduate of the University of Nigeria College of Medicine and a Fellow of the UK Faculty of Public Health.

She published 'From crisis response to country control: Restoring agency and sustainability in global health' in *PLOS Medicine* in March 2026.

Richard Horton
Editor-in-Chief, *The Lancet*



Richard Horton is Editor-in-Chief of *The Lancet*. He qualified in physiology and medicine with honours from the University of Birmingham in 1986. He joined *The Lancet* in 1990, moving to New York as North American Editor in 1993.

In 2016, he chaired the Expert Group for the High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth, convened by Presidents Hollande of France and Zuma of South Africa. From 2011 to 2015, he was co-chair of the UN's independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health.

In 2011, he was elected a Foreign Associate of the US Institute of Medicine and, in 2015, he received the Friendship Award from the Government of China. In 2019, he was awarded the WHO Director-General's Health Leaders Award for outstanding leadership in global health and the Roux Prize in recognition of innovation in the application of global health evidence. In 2021, he received the Physicians for Human Rights Award in recognition of extraordinary leadership in advancing health and human rights.

He now works to develop the idea of planetary health – the health of human civilizations and the ecosystems on which they depend. In 2020, he published *The COVID-19 Catastrophe: What's Gone Wrong and How to Stop It Happening Again*. A revised, updated, and expanded second edition was published in 2021. As part of the UK's 2023 Honours, Dr Horton was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in recognition for services to Health and Medical Journalism.