

A WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION DISENGAGED FROM THE UNITED STATES: WHAT NEXT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH?¹

ABSTRACT

On January 20, 2025, which is the first day of the second term of President Trump, the United States formally initiated the U.S. withdrawal from the World Health Organization's (WHO) membership through a Presidential Executive Order. Ironically, the U.S had founded the WHO in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II, and established it as a specialized agency of the United Nations to promote global health and coordinate responses to health emergencies. When the termination process completed after the required 12-month notification period in 2026, it left the rest of the world to grapple with "what does a WHO divorced by the US mean for the rest of the world to enable access to healthcare?"

The paper indulges in the question and underscores that capacity building through appropriate policies comporting with new realities is critical to achieving healthcare access. The paper presents policy options within a regional framework to promote transfer of technology and innovation with the goal of inducing more efficiency into regional and local pharmaceutical industry. Next, the paper will discuss components of innovation policy at a sub-regional/national level focusing on intellectual property policies that affect pharmaceutical research and access such as patents, licensing, know-how and transfer of technology. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for formal regional health centric instruments to promote regional cooperation in critical areas such as prosecution and regulatory approvals.

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