

Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer
Chairman of the Advisory Council
on International Affairs
P.O. Box 20061
2500 EB The Hague

Date: 25 February 2021

Re: Request for advice on the framework for a Dutch global health strategy

Dear Mr de Hoop Scheffer,

Today, 25 February 2021, the House of Representatives decided, pursuant to article 30 of the Rules of Procedure of the House of Representatives of the States General, to request an advisory report from the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) on the framework for a Dutch global health strategy.

The objective of the report is to lay the foundation for the development of coherent policy regarding global health issues, which the Netherlands can use to implement its strategic agenda and, leading by example, participate in international forums addressing global health issues and developing multilateral strategies. The report can thus also serve as a basis for the new government in drafting a global health strategy policy document.

On behalf of the House, I would kindly ask you to comply with this request.

Yours sincerely,

Khadija Arib
President of the House of Representatives
of the States General

ANNEXE

Further explanation of the request for advice on a Dutch global health strategy by the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

The Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation proposes requesting the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) to produce an advisory report setting out the framework for a Dutch global health strategy. The objective of the report is to lay the foundation for the development of coherent policy regarding global health issues, which the Netherlands can use to implement its strategic agenda and, leading by example, participate in international forums addressing global health issues and developing multilateral strategies. The report must expressly take into account the interministerial relevance of the topic of global health.

Background of the request

Global efforts to expand access to healthcare and combat disease have been part of Dutch policy on international cooperation for decades. In a number of areas the Netherlands is in fact a leading player internationally. What is more, the Dutch business community, civil society and academic community also play an important role around the world. For example, the KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation is a global leader in the fight against tuberculosis, the Leiden-based pharmaceutical company Janssen has developed a vaccine against COVID-19, and Philips has swiftly redirected its business model towards the production of medical devices. The Netherlands has relatively limited resources, but given its abundance of available expertise it can play a driving role worldwide in strengthening global health.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how interconnected the world is. A virus knows no borders and can wreak havoc from one day to the next. The global response to the pandemic has made clear that there are many different perspectives on the right approach to fighting the virus. It has also shed light on major inequalities in terms of capacity and available resources. Through greater coherence, we can be better prepared for and more effective in tackling global health crises of the sort we are now experiencing. To be able to help resolve the current crisis and mount a more effective response in the future, it is essential to develop a coherent global policy framework – or, at the very least, gain insight into where the strengths and weakness of global healthcare lie – with due respect for local customs, traditions and preferences. Perhaps even more important is the need to take account of the differing levels of healthcare around the world. The principle ‘leave no one behind’ is especially relevant in terms of strengthening global health systems.²

During the 2021 debate on the Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation budget, the House of Representatives adopted with a large majority the motion submitted by MP Anne Kuik on establishing a Dutch global health strategy (Parliamentary Paper 35 570 XVII, no. 22). The motion considers that the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for a global health strategy. Various international initiatives are in place to improve the coherence of health systems.

¹ <https://www.dutchglobalhealthalliance.org>

² <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind>

By adopting this motion, the House of Representative agrees that the Netherlands should participate in these initiatives where doing so adds value. The motion calls on the government to conduct a study on the added value and opportunities of a Dutch global health strategy. In the light of the great urgency of the current global health situation, it is not advisable to wait too long in implementing the motion. Due to the upcoming general elections in the Netherlands, implementation of the motion could easily be delayed by over a year. However, the need for a global health strategy is too pressing for the Dutch government to wait.

The motion was prompted in part by the German Global Health Strategy, which was established by Germany's Federal Ministry of Health in October 2020.³ The German strategy calls for healthy lifestyles and greater efforts in disease prevention. In addition, it draws a connection between climate change and health issues. The strategy examines how to strengthen health systems and defines major risks and dangers for the future. The objective of the German study is to ensure the efficiency and sustainability of efforts in the area of global health, so that a significant contribution can be made to the health of all people worldwide between now and 2030.

Framework of this request

The primary purpose of the AIV's advisory report is to provide recommendations to the next government regarding a comprehensive Dutch global health strategy. To this end, it should also clarify the context in which the Dutch government can establish a coherent policy framework for a strategic global health agenda for the decades ahead. The AIV is requested to cover at least the following points in its report:

- Define a global health strategy from the Dutch perspective.
- Review how the Netherlands has participated in efforts to address global health issues in the past.
- Take stock of what initiatives other European countries, the European Union and multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization have already pursued to establish a global health strategy.
- Advise on where the Netherlands can add value with a global health strategy and on the areas in which the Dutch government must invest (both domestically and internationally) to have a greater impact on global health.
- Assess what added economic value a global health strategy would have for the Netherlands.
- Explain the role that emergency medical aid plays in a global health strategy.
- Shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of global health infrastructure and medical supply chains.
- Provide recommendations on how to increase coherence among health-related topics within Dutch development cooperation policy.
- Clarify the role that different ministries could/should play in a Dutch global health strategy.
- Pinpoint areas the Netherlands should focus on (topics, diseases and medical products) in order to achieve and retain a position as a global leader in this field.

³ Global Health Strategy, PDF (Bundesgesundheitsministerium.de).

- Clarify the role of research and innovation in disease control and prevention, and the opportunities for the Netherlands in this regard.
- Advise on the role of prevention in strengthening global health.
- Take stock of existing systems in the global distribution of medicine and medical devices, and make recommendations on how they can be improved.
- Draw up a road map for how the Netherlands can establish an comprehensive global health strategy.

Timetable

The House of Representatives requests the AIV to complete its advisory report and submit it to the House in the second half of 2021. This will allow the new government to incorporate recommendations from the report when drawing up a global health strategy policy document.