

IHP 896 – AI summary & some key reads

Introduction

The 896th edition of the **International Health Policies (IHP) newsletter** (11 September 2026), published by the Health Policy unit at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, opens with an editorial by Kristof Decoster reflecting on the upcoming World Health Summit (11–13 October in Berlin). Highlighting a quote from IHME's Chris Murray, the editorial underscores that health financing is contracting globally, progress on mortality is slowing, and emerging threats are shifting faster than governance institutions can adapt. Decoster highlights the Summit's flagship Keynote Session—the launch of the *Lancet Commission on 21st Century Global Threats to Health* (co-hosted by IHME and The Lancet Group)—which examines catastrophic risks spanning pandemics, antimicrobial resistance, conflict, malicious AI, non-communicable diseases, and mental health.

Referencing Martin McKee's analysis in *Lancet Public Health*, Decoster notes that the erosion of the rules-based international order has become one of the single greatest amplifiers of public health risks. In an era characterized by polycrisis, permacrisis, and metacrisis, he argues that aiming for a "fit for purpose" global health architecture is unrealistic; multilateral governance should instead prioritize **damage control** and **"Resilience and Stability for All"**. Discourse in global health has transitioned from "cosmopolitan convergence" toward strategic **"chokepoints"**, as evidenced by the high-stakes Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) negotiations in Geneva.

The editorial also touches on broader geopolitical dynamics, including the tense WHO Director-General election race, political instability in Western Europe (notably regional electoral gains by the extreme-right AfD in Germany and political gridlock in France), and public dissatisfaction with aloof leadership enforcing austerity. Rejecting explanations that attribute societal polarization solely to social media or disinformation, Decoster points to corrosive double standards in late-capitalist societies. He urges global health reformers to think radically by backing structural wealth redistribution policies, supporting the newly launched WHS Academic Alliance–Lancet Commission on academic responsibility for trust in science, and establishing an IPCC-style **International Panel on Inequality**.

Highlights of the week

1. Ebola Emergency DRC

The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has surpassed 6,600 cases, making it the fastest-growing Ebola outbreak in world history. The WHO reports an urgent need for 5,000 additional health workers and 1,600 treatment beds. Severe unpaid salary delays have led frustrated healthcare workers to allow families contact with deceased patients, violating core outbreak protocols. Operational analysis in *The Lancet* emphasizes embedding prospective mental health and psychosocial support into responder safety protocols. Former Africa CDC lead Ahmed Ogwel Ouma highlights the necessity of predictable, domestic financing to sustain Africa's "preparedness dividend" rather than relying on emergency mobilization. *Global Policy* examines the

divergence between Uganda's successful containment and DRC's widespread transmission, stressing that international coordination must connect directly to frontline capacity. Operational NGO ALIMA continues to play a central role using a locally led model and co-running key clinical trials (PALM, EBO-PEP). Meanwhile, funding responses remain flawed: two parallel appeals total \$2.5 billion, but uncoordinated disbursement and lack of financial tracking leave critical gaps unaddressed.

2. Run-up to the UN High-Level Meeting on PPPR (Sept 25)

Ahead of the UN High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response in New York, a commentary in *Lancet Global Health* stresses that credibility must be measured by governance deliverables rather than political declarations. Priorities include aligning institutional coherence across the expanding pandemic architecture, securing predictable and rapidly deployable financing models, and establishing an independent federated monitoring mechanism under regional leadership.

3. Run-up to New Round in the PABS Negotiations (14–18 Sept)

Negotiations on the WHO Pandemic Agreement's Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) Annex resume in Geneva amid deep polarization. European Union lead negotiator Americo Beviglia Zampetti outlined the EU's pragmatic position while pointing to LMIC transactional approaches. In a briefing note for negotiators, James Love (KEI) argues that linking pathogen sample access directly to equity obligations is flawed and restricts scientific collaboration; instead, benefit-sharing should be enforced at the point of market authorization and product sales by host governments.

4. More on PPPR & Global Health Security

A controversial agreement between the US Department of Defense and NIH/NIAID could shift up to \$2 billion in infectious disease research funds under Pentagon biodefense oversight. In *The Telegraph*, Sania Nishtar highlights the establishment of the first strategic mpox vaccine stockpile as a vital step for global health emergency architecture. A *Devex Pro* feature evaluates the "100-Day Vaccine" ambition, revealing that while scientific platforms advance, regulatory, contractual, and clinical trial bottlenecks remain, compounded by a \$128 million funding gap for CEPI. Furthermore, academic analysis in *WMHP* deconstructs four competing interpretations of "health security," warning against conceptual ambiguity.

5. Global Health Reform

In *The Lancet*, mid-career professionals criticize current global health reform initiatives (including WHO's Joint Task Force, UN80, Lusaka Agenda, and Accra Reset) for being led by the same legacy leaders who built the system decades ago; they propose setting standards, sharing power across generations, and financing succession. Controversy continues over UN Secretary-General Guterres's proposed UN80 merger of UNFPA and UN Women, with feminist coalitions calling for non-structural alternatives. Broader UN80 updates detail mergers among training and research institutes. Finally, the Accra Reset High-Level Panel prepares to present recommendations at UNGA81, emphasizing long-term institutional transformation.

6. WHO Director-General Race

Germany has unexpectedly declined to nominate a candidate for the upcoming WHO Director-General election following Spain's withdrawal, leaving four official nominees. Simultaneously, reports

from Indonesia highlight severe stress among intern doctors operating within a commercialized healthcare system overseen by an Indonesian minister seeking the WHO leadership post.

7. More on Global Health Governance & Finance/Funding

An open letter supported by Global 50/50 urges the incoming UN Secretary-General to commit to institutionalizing gender equality, sex-disaggregated data reporting, and dedicated budget allocations across all UN entities. Saima Wazed has resigned as WHO Southeast Asia Regional Director following fraud investigations. Martin McKee outlines four strategic proposals to protect public health infrastructure amid the collapse of the international rules-based order. Ilona Kickbusch analyzes the "geoeconomic turn" in global health, detailing how health statecraft is caught between PABS negotiations and unilateral 100% US tariffs on patented pharmaceuticals. PMNCH survey data reveals that nearly 80% of organizations in women's and children's health face funding cuts leading to program closures. The Global Fund's independent evaluation function faces potential dissolution following the departure of its evaluation chief. Additional developments include *Nature* studies on Malawi's health system investments, *Lancet* modeling showing wealth taxes could avert millions of deaths, proposals for an International Panel on Inequality, stagnating EU Health ODA, expanding Asian family philanthropy in health, ODI insights on health ministry budgeting, Jeremy Farrar joining PATH, Dr. Vanessa Kerry's appointment as WHO Envoy for Health Resilience, host-city competition poaching Geneva-based UN agencies, OECD DAC reviews, and geopolitical analysis of European vs. Chinese development strategies.

8. Global Tax Justice & Debt Reform

A joint report by Save the Children UK and Debt Justice UK presents six concrete reforms for the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments to make sovereign debt restructuring faster, fairer, and effective in protecting social and health spending.

9. Trump 2.0, US Global Health Strategy & Bilateral Health Agreements

Hard-liner Andrew Veprek has taken over the US State Department's foreign assistance bureau, raising concerns over tightened foreign aid disbursements. Meanwhile, the US is phasing out PEPFAR HIV funding to Namibia following an impasse over US demands for unrestricted, rapid access to national health data and pathogen samples.

10. Commercial Determinants of Health

A WHO summary highlights that direct tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke exposure significantly increase infertility risks. Ilona Kickbusch analyzes Meta's \$18 billion legal settlement with US states as a potential "tobacco moment" establishing digital platform design as a global health regulatory category. Research in *Lancet Planetary Health* connects Special Economic Zones, casino money laundering, and illegal wildlife trade to heightened zoonotic disease risks in Southeast Asia.

11. Mental Health

Marking World Suicide Prevention Day 2026 under the theme "Changing the Narrative on Suicide," public health bodies urge open dialogue. *Think Global Health* examines the international rise of age-based social media restrictions and calls for youth involvement in regulatory policymaking.

12. Child Health

A neuroimaging study from King's College London and the University of Cape Town reveals that babies born to anaemic mothers have reduced brain volumes in areas regulating movement, learning, and emotion.

13. Planetary Health

Turkey hosts a pre-COP31 climate finance summit in Istanbul, framing climate investment as a strategic security requirement. The Global Climate & Health Alliance launches the "Fossil PR Toolkit" to expose communications agencies serving both health organizations and fossil fuel corporations. Reports highlight internal splits within climate movement coalitions over UN science negotiations, Exeter research identifying clean electricity as a high-leverage "positive tipping point", and a study in *Environmental Research Letters* warning that natural carbon feedback loops could increase global warming by 20–30%. Furthermore, Afrobarometer data shows widespread African public demand for climate justice, Carlos Lopes critiques climate finance mechanisms in Africa, UNEP assesses economic returns on clean air action, WMO reports on air quality degradation from wildfires, and CGD research calls for updating 1992 UNFCCC country climate classifications.

14. AI & Health

UN Human Rights Commissioner Volker Türk warns that unchecked artificial intelligence poses existential risks to humanity requiring binding global governance. Conversely, *Nature* showcases a positive application: an AI model trained on protein measurements predicting drug efficacy in triple-negative breast cancer.

15. Decolonize Global Health

An analysis in the *Review of African Political Economy* traces how African medical manufacturing has evolved from post-independence social transformation goals toward modern health security and national sovereignty imperatives.

16. Access to Medicines, Vaccines & Other Health Technologies

Generic pharmaceutical manufacturers in Africa are expanding production to target the rising burden of non-communicable diseases. A comprehensive feature in *Geneva Health Files* scrutinizes the voluntary licensing and access barriers surrounding Gilead's long-acting HIV prevention drug lenacapavir, as South African producer Aspen opts out of manufacturing it. Additional updates include WHO prequalification of a multi-dose RSV maternal vaccine, critiques of US childhood vaccine recommendation shifts as global signals, and Kenya's partnership with Pfizer to reduce cancer treatment costs.

17. Reports & Commissions of the Week

The launch of the WHS Academic Alliance–Lancet Commission on academic responsibility aims to address public trust in science over a two-year mandate. Meanwhile, the *State of the Humanitarian System 2026* report warns that 64 million fewer people received humanitarian assistance in 2025 due to unprecedented 30% aid funding cuts.

18. Miscellaneous

A London School of Economics report featured in *The Telegraph* warns that global food insecurity and hunger pose direct national security risks to European nations. Finally, commentary on academic publishing addresses the crisis of unpaid peer-review labor behind journal paywalls.

Some Key Reads of the Week

1. **CIDRAP News** – *Ebola outbreak in DR Congo tops 6,600 cases*
 - **Publication:** CIDRAP News | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Reports on WHO's urgent request for 5,000 health workers and 1,600 treatment beds as the DRC Ebola epidemic rapidly expands.
2. **African Arguments** – *Ebola and Africa's Preparedness Dividend: From Crisis to Capability*
 - **Publication:** African Arguments | **First Author:** Ahmed Ogwel Ouma | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Highlights the necessity of predictable, domestic financing to maintain Africa's public health institutions between health crises.
3. **Lancet Global Health** – *From commitment to governance: what should the 2026 UN high-level meeting on pandemic preparedness deliver?*
 - **Publication:** Lancet Global Health | **First Author:** Nelson Aghogho Evaborhene | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Outlines three core governance priorities for the UN High-Level Meeting to translate political commitments into sustainable PPP architecture.
4. **Geneva Health Files (Must-Read)** – *The View from Brussels: European Parliamentarians on the Pathogen Access Benefit Sharing (PABS) System; PABS Primer*
 - **Publication:** Geneva Health Files | **First Author:** P Patnaik | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Analyzes European Parliament debates and the EU negotiator's pragmatic strategy ahead of the resume PABS negotiations.
5. **KEI Briefing Note** – *WHO PABS Annex Negotiations*
 - **Publication:** Knowledge Ecology International | **First Author:** James Love | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Recommends enforcing benefit-sharing at the point of product sales authorization rather than restricting pathogen sample access.
6. **The New York Times** – *Pentagon Agreement With N.I.H. on Biodefense Draws Alarm From Democrats*
 - **Publication:** The New York Times | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Details a biodefense agreement opening up to \$2 billion of NIAID funds to Defense Department collaboration.
7. **The Telegraph** – *The world has a new weapon to fight mpox*
 - **Publication:** The Telegraph | **First Author:** S Nishtar | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Examines the establishment of the first strategic mpox vaccine stockpile as a vital step in emergency health security.
8. **The Lancet (Comment)** – *Global health reform is missing a generation*
 - **Publication:** The Lancet | **First Author:** Brian Li Han Wong | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Calls for standard-setting, intergenerational power sharing, and succession funding to include mid-career leaders in system redesign.
9. **Health Policy Watch** – *Controversy Over Merger Between UN Women and UNFPA Continues*
 - **Publication:** Health Policy Watch | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Details opposition from feminist organizations against UN Secretary-General Guterres's proposed UN80 agency merger.

10. **Health Policy Watch** – *BREAKING: Germany Declines to Nominate Candidate for Upcoming WHO Director-General Election*
 - **Publication:** Health Policy Watch | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Reports on Germany's unexpected decision not to put forward a WHO DG nominee, leaving four candidates in the race.
11. **People's Health Dispatch** – *Indonesia's intern doctors are being pushed to the brink under health minister and WHO hopeful*
 - **Publication:** People's Health Dispatch | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Examines working conditions for Indonesian intern doctors amid health commercialization under a WHO leadership contender.
12. **Lancet Global Health** – *Why the health community should care about the next UN Secretary-General*
 - **Publication:** Lancet Global Health | **First Author:** Kent Buse | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Urges the next UN leader to enforce gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data, and dedicated budget allocations system-wide.
13. **Geneva Health Files (Must-Read)** – *The Geoeconomic Turn in Global Health: Pathogen Access & Benefit Sharing As a Chokepoint*
 - **Publication:** Geneva Health Files | **First Author:** Ilona Kickbusch | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Analyzes global health statecraft at the intersection of multilateral PABS negotiations and unilateral US pharmaceutical tariffs.
14. **Substack (Cool Analysis)** – *The tale of the fellow struggler*
 - **Publication:** Intercomms | **First Author:** Virginia Mucchi | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Analyzes how China frames geopolitics as development while Europe frames development as geopolitics.
15. **Save the Children UK & Debt Justice UK** – *Now is The Time to Act: Six Reforms for the G20 Common Framework for Debt Treatments*
 - **Publication:** Save the Children UK / Debt Justice UK | **First Author:** L Darby | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Outlines six practical G20 reforms to ensure timely sovereign debt relief and protect health spending.
16. **Devex Newswire** – *Trump's new foreign aid gatekeeper could tighten the tap*
 - **Publication:** Devex | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Details Andrew Veprek taking over the US foreign assistance bureau and potential cuts to multilateral aid funding.
17. **Health Policy Watch** – *US to Phase Out HIV Support for Namibia After Data-Sharing Impasse*
 - **Publication:** Health Policy Watch | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Explains the end of US PEPFAR aid to Namibia following disagreement over bilateral pathogen and health data sharing demands.
18. **WHO Knowledge Summary** – *Tobacco smoking may be harming your chances of having a baby*
 - **Publication:** World Health Organization | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Summarizes global evidence demonstrating that tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke significantly increase infertility risks.
19. **BMJ Opinion** – *From tobacco to TikTok, continued: What the \$18bn Meta settlement really means*
 - **Publication:** BMJ Opinion | **First Author:** Ilona Kickbusch | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Examines Meta's \$18 billion settlement as a watershed moment establishing digital platform design as a global health determinant.
20. **Think Global Health** – *The Rise of Social Media Bans: Can Regulation Improve Teen Mental Health?*
 - **Publication:** Think Global Health | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)

- Investigates national youth social media restrictions and argues for youth participation in mental health policymaking.
 - 21. **The Guardian** – *Babies born to anaemic mothers have smaller brains, study finds*
 - **Publication:** The Guardian | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Reports on neuroimaging research linking maternal anaemia to reduced infant brain volume in key cognitive regions.
 - 22. **Devex Pro** – *The pre-COP31 finance meeting no one is talking about*
 - **Publication:** Devex Pro | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Previews Turkey's climate finance summit in Istanbul framing climate investment as a strategic security priority.
 - 23. **Nature (Recommended Read)** – *How countries can grow without impoverishing future generations*
 - **Publication:** Nature | **First Author:** Eoin McLaughlin | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Recommends that governments track comprehensive natural and social capital stocks alongside GDP to protect future generations.
 - 24. **UN News** – *AI: Türk urges action before it becomes an 'existential risk to humanity'*
 - **Publication:** UN News | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Highlights UN High Commissioner Volker Türk's call for binding global oversight of artificial intelligence.
 - 25. **Nature News** – *AI model predicts which breast-cancer drugs work best*
 - **Publication:** Nature | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Demonstrates an AI model trained on protein measurements predicting drug effectiveness in triple-negative breast cancer.
 - 26. **Review of African Political Economy** – *'Wisdom, solidarity and investment from within': medical manufacturing as an expression of sovereignty and solidarity in post-independence Africa*
 - **Publication:** Review of African Political Economy | **First Author:** L Paremoer | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Traces the transformation of African medical manufacturing from post-independence social vision to modern health security.
 - 27. **Devex** – *As NCDs rise in Africa, generic drugmakers see a growing market*
 - **Publication:** Devex | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Details how African generic medicine manufacturers are expanding production to address the growing non-communicable disease burden.
 - 28. **Geneva Health Files (Must-Read)** – *The Illustrative Case of Lenacapavir: The Gatekeepers of Prevention, Access & Financing*
 - **Publication:** Geneva Health Files | **First Author:** S Thakur | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Investigates voluntary licensing mechanics and equity barriers surrounding long-acting HIV prevention drug lenacapavir.
 - 29. **The Lancet (Comment)** – *The WHS Academic Alliance–Lancet Commission on academic responsibility for trust in science and societal change*
 - **Publication:** The Lancet | **First Author:** Axel Pries | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Announces a major new commission tasked with developing concrete recommendations to strengthen public trust in science.
 - 30. **The Telegraph** – *Global hunger is a threat to Britain's national security, report says*
 - **Publication:** The Telegraph | **First Author:** N/A | **Link:** [Article Link](#)
 - Covers an LSE report warning that food shortages and global hunger drive mass migration and geopolitical instability.
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