

Portugal
World Health Organization
76th Session of the World Health Assembly
(21 - 30 May 2023)

15.1 Strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies

Chair,

Excellences,

Portugal aligns itself with the statement previously made on behalf of the EU and thanks WHO for the HEPR document and the proposals it contains.

We appreciate the organization's leadership in attempting to shape the global health architecture and stress the need for collaborative approaches across sectors to improve coherence and prevent overlaps.

Pandemic preparedness and response (PPR) require a strong WHO but strengthening the global health architecture should not only focus on improving health security. Member States' actions are crucial to strengthening national health systems and safeguarding the health of their citizens, especially through essential public health functions. Other relevant stakeholders, including NSAs, have a role to play.

During this discussions we must also be guided by the lessons learned from past emergencies. For instance, we know how adequate and sustainable financing is crucial for PPR.

On this note, we urge Member States to contribute to the WHO's Contingency Fund for Emergencies. CFE has been of the utmost relevance in past years, giving the flexibility to act quickly in the face of emergencies, and the funds released made a great difference sparing millions of direct and indirect beneficiaries from the immediate, dire consequences of health emergencies.

Chair,

Concerning the implementation of these proposals, we would like to commend the importance of scaling up effective mechanisms for independent monitoring and evaluation, such as the Universal Health and Preparedness Review.

Compliance has been previously recognized as one of the most needed actions in PPR (by evaluation panels like the IPPPR but also previous IHR evaluations such as the west-Africa Ebola outbreak) and it is one that can potentially bring equity to global architecture.

The importance of scaling up UHPRs lies in their ability to provide countries with a channel for timely review and resources allocated to improve their capacity to detect, notify, and respond to health emergencies. By conducting regular UHPRs, countries can demonstrate their commitment by identifying gaps in their preparedness and response systems and taking action to address them. By publicly committing to improving and being held accountable for progress made, countries can also be eligible for resources to improve their capacities.

This is crucial in ensuring that we are globally prepared to respond to health emergencies and that all Member States can prevent and mitigate the impact of pandemics. By identifying gaps in a systematic and technical way and linking those gaps with financing and investment opportunities for those that most need them, we improve those gaps but also enhance global equity and coherence.

The mere agreement on paper holds little value if we fail to fulfil our obligations or lack the capacity to do so. Therefore, we strongly urge all Member States to willingly participate in these reviews, and rest assured of our unwavering dedication in this regard.

Thank you.

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