



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

150th Session of the WHO Executive Board Virtual Platform 24-29 January 2022

Pilar	2	One billion more people better protected from health emergencies
Agenda	15.4	Influenza preparedness

The Philippines supports the holistic approach towards the enhancement and expansion of the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System for monitoring respiratory viruses with epidemic and pandemic potential; as well as the proposed integrated, end-to-end approach to sentinel surveillance of influenza and SARS-CoV-2 from sampling all the way through sequence data sharing. It will strengthen Member States' existing surveillance systems, including expansion through subnational laboratories, and will strengthen capacities to detect the emergence of new virus strains.

The country is enhancing existing sentinel-based respiratory virus surveillance system for Influenza-like Illness and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness through expansion of sentinel sites and regional laboratories, including ports of entry, that will perform Multiplex RT PCR of Influenza and SARS-CoV-2 and integration of Whole Genome Sequencing of positive SARS-CoV-2 specimens.

The following are crucial for effective expansion of the system and which the Philippines is currently pursuing:

1. Building capacity for whole genome sequencing of Influenza and other respiratory viruses such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus;
2. Timely sharing of Genetic Sequence Data with accompanying metadata through publicly accessible databases;
3. Regular sharing of representative clinical samples and isolates of influenza specimens to WHO Regional Reference Laboratories for annual Influenza vaccine composition; and
4. Continued systematic and timely sharing of data with GISRS

While strengthened influenza sentinel surveillance has benefited the COVID 19 response, the world must still ramp up its efforts to prepare for future outbreaks and pandemics. This will involve updating minimum capacities and regulatory tools needed to facilitate efficient and effective response, including enabling the market for health technologies to include vaccine development and protective equipment production.

It is absolutely imperative that we remove barriers to scientific and technical collaboration among nations to facilitate access to health interventions. Regulatory capacity to rapidly introduce innovations, with strong pharmacovigilance systems in place, will enable better capture of real world data and better access to interventions not just in a few countries but to the world-at-large. Thank you.