

Response to the Report of the Director General

The UK thanks Director General Tedros and the staff of WHO as they work tirelessly to protect and promote health, and as they respond to a growing number of significant humanitarian situations around the globe. Covid has had a profound impact on every country, not just directly but indirectly including on treatment for other diseases, and pressure on health programmes and systems. Recovery from this is one of the biggest challenges in health. There have also been new challenges that WHO has to respond to, such as mpox.

We continue to be greatly concerned by the impact of conflict on health around the globe. This affects civilians as well as combatants, conflict causes far reaching health consequences including the disruption, cessation and destruction of health and social services, the displacement of populations, the heightened risk of disease transmission, the resulting food insecurity, conflict related sexual violence and the deleterious impacts conflict has on mental health.

In Europe, Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is having and will continue to have devastating effects on the health of the people of Ukraine. The deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure has had a major impact on all, but particularly on the most vulnerable given winter conditions.

The UK is fully supportive of WHO's leadership on health emergencies, and the action taken to help those impacted by humanitarian crises and climate change. These challenges are vast and complex and it is critical that WHO continues to strengthen how it supports countries to prepare for and respond to poly crises.

We must not forget that strong health systems, where people are universally able to access the prevention and care they need, underpin our success in responding to emergencies. It is therefore vital that WHO is focused on getting back on track with the full General Programme of Work, the triple billion targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. COVID-19 and other crises have created setbacks and at this juncture WHO has a vital role to play in supporting countries to refocus on core health work: expanding coverage of affordable, quality health services; creating resilient, sustainable, and equitable health systems; and promoting health and wellbeing for all.

To achieve this WHO must continue to be an organisation that is fit for purpose, and able to respond effectively to global challenges. The UK therefore continues to support efforts to strengthen WHO. This includes:

- extensive reforms to the Executive Board and its sub-committees which should be geared towards providing strategic direction and advice; inclusive and transparent decision making; and building strong links to the regions.
- improvements to work in countries where there has been progress but there is much further to go
- increased transparency and accountability particularly through continuing its urgent journey to prevent and respond effectively to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

Finally, the UK is pleased that this Executive Board will also have the opportunity to discuss Clinical Trials following the adoption of the *Strengthening clinical trials to provide high-quality evidence on health interventions and to improve research quality and coordination* resolution by the 75th World Health Assembly last year. The resolution is the first step in improving the clinical trial ecosystem, ensuring that effective trials are routine practice, enabling efficient responses to national and regional public health priorities, supporting country leadership and equitable partnership, and

establishing appropriate mechanisms to pivot routine capacity to support emergency response as needed.