

Strengthening health emergency preparedness and response in cities and urban settings

The Seventy-fifth World Health Assembly,

Recalling Member States' commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, including to strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks;

Recalling also the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025, and its strategic priority of one billion more people better protected from health emergencies by 2025;

Further recalling resolution WHA73.1 (2020) on COVID-19 response, in which the Seventy-third World Health Assembly requested the Director-General to, inter alia, continue to build and strengthen the capacities of WHO at all levels to fully and effectively perform the functions entrusted to it under the International Health Regulations (2005);

Also recalling resolution WHA73.8 (2020) on strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005), which recognizes that urban settings are especially vulnerable to infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics, and that urban planning is a key element of preparedness and response;

Reaffirming resolution WHA74.7 (2021) on strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies, which underlines that preparing for and responding to health emergencies is primarily the responsibility and crucial role of governments;

Recognizing the important role that cities and local authorities have in preventing, preparing for and responding to health emergencies;

Acknowledging the High-level Conference on Preparedness for Public Health Emergencies: Challenges and Opportunities in Urban Areas held in Lyon, France, on 3 and 4 December 2018, which acknowledged that urbanization leads to new challenges for global health and that multisectoral coordination, including that at local level, and engagement of local authorities and local communities, as well as urban leaders, play an important role in emergency preparedness and response;

Recognizing the work of the technical working group on advancing health emergency preparedness in cities and urban settings in COVID-19 and beyond,¹ which led to the development of the framework for strengthening health emergency preparedness in cities and urban settings² and the

¹ WHO and the Government of Singapore co-hosted the virtual technical working group from February to April 2021 to advance the topic.

² <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/348351> (accessed 12 May 2022).

operational guidance for national and local authorities,¹ and encouraging broader engagement of Member States in the discussions within this technical working group;

Noting with concern that the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed serious shortcomings in preparedness – especially at the city and urban levels – for timely and effective prevention and detection of, as well as response to, potential health emergencies, including in the capacity and resilience of health systems, indicating the need to better prepare for future health emergencies;

Stressing the key role of coordination between the national, regional and local levels, as well as of effective community engagement, in preparedness for and response to health emergencies;

Highlighting the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and public health measures taken in response to the pandemic on cities and urban settings, including in informal settlements;

Highlighting also the concern regarding lack of adequate resources for health emergency preparedness and response, particularly at the subnational level, and that resources available are predominantly at the national level,

1. URGES Member States:²

- (1) to sustain political commitment at the highest level and to give due attention to preparedness for and response to health emergencies in cities and urban settings, recognizing their unique vulnerabilities;
- (2) to provide adequate resources and to strengthen capacities and capabilities in urban health emergency preparedness and response;
- (3) to strengthen multisectoral, multilevel and multistakeholder collaboration in national health emergency preparedness and response policies;
- (4) to develop, strengthen and implement health emergency preparedness and response plans, recognizing that such plans should be context specific, given the heterogeneity of cities and urban settings;
- (5) to consider conducting simulation exercises and intra- and after-action reviews through adopting a multisectoral, multilevel and multistakeholder approach;
- (6) to collaborate and support learning and sharing of good practices with international partners including national public health institutes, the WHO Global Strategic Preparedness Network, and other relevant national and international organizations working on the urban health emergency preparedness agenda;

¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/351721> (accessed 12 May 2022).

² And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

- (1) to provide technical support to Member States,¹ upon request, to strengthen capacities and capabilities in urban health emergency preparedness and response;
- (2) to take appropriate measures for securing adequate financial and human resources at all levels of WHO for providing this support, in line with the priorities of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2025;
- (3) to provide support to Member States, upon their request, in the implementation of the framework for strengthening health emergency preparedness in cities and urban settings;
- (4) to submit a progress report on the implementation of this resolution to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly in 2024.

Seventh plenary meeting, 27 May 2022
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¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.