



WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES (IFRC)

SEVENTH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATING BODY (INB)

Geneva, 10 November 2023

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies commends the work of the International Negotiating Bureau on the draft of the Pandemic Accord. We work with 191 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, many playing a critical role to support their governments to prevent, prepare for, and respond to pandemics. Based on this experience in communities all over the world, the IFRC proposes to strengthen language in 3 areas: equity, the role of local actors, and effective legal frameworks.

Equity: The WHO Pandemic Agreement should contain a more holistic definition of “Equity” and “equitable access”, and this should be reflected throughout the Agreement text. IFRC recommends strengthening language around risk, vulnerability, and protection, including obligations to protect and promote access for all. IFRC suggests specifically identify “persons at risk” or “people in vulnerable situations” to include reference to factors such as age, immunocompromised persons, people living with disabilities.

Role of community and local actors: IFRC stresses the central role of communities and local frontline workers in building trust in and strengthening health systems. Their roles are essential throughout pandemic prevention and public health surveillance, preparedness, readiness, and resilience phases. The current Pandemic Agreement should feature more explicitly the essential contributions in preparedness, risk communication, and trust building, all essential for the acceptance and implementation of critical public health measures.

Governance: IFRC stresses the importance of up-to-date laws, policies and plans for public health emergencies. Legal frameworks need to: provide legal facilities to frontline responders to enable them to safely reach and respond to the needs of communities; outline whole-of-society and whole-of-government coordination structures; and establish early warning early action protocols with obligations to inform the public. To achieve this, the accord should encourage governments to strengthen domestic legal preparedness by reviewing and updating laws, strategies, and plans relating to public health emergencies.

IFRC stands ready to provide more concrete language suggestions as well as to support with implementation at the local level.