

New Zealand National Statement

World Health Organisation – 154th meeting of the Executive Board

Item 14: WHO's work in health emergencies

25 January 2024

Thank you Chair. We welcome the secretariat's report on WHO's work in health emergencies. WHO is operating in an increasingly complex world in which health needs are greater than ever. New Zealand is proud to support the Contingency Fund for Emergencies, enabling WHO to be on the ground and providing support in health emergencies as soon as possible.

We thank the Director-General for his report on the health situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including east Jerusalem.

The situation in Gaza is a health catastrophe. This is clear from the Director-General's report and the accounts of humanitarian and healthcare responders who have seen recent conditions in Gaza first-hand.

The health infrastructure in Gaza is barely functional. We are deeply alarmed about the risk posed by outbreaks of disease, on top of the significant challenges with nutrition, sanitation, overcrowding and access to health care. Inspection and approvals processes are delaying the delivery of vital, life-saving assistance.

New Zealand has consistently called for all parties to this conflict to comply with their obligations under international law, including the need to ensure the protection of all medical and humanitarian personnel and facilities, in line with Security Council Resolution 2286.

Protection of all medical and humanitarian personnel, and the protection of medical facilities is paramount. Medical facilities must never be used for military purposes and, crucially, must never be the object of attack.

We welcome the Executive Board's efforts to reach consensus over the adoption of the resolution on this health emergency, underscoring the importance of ensuring that the WHO avoids politicisation and maintains its consensus-based approach.

Finally, we offer New Zealand's unwavering support for all workers, from UN and other agencies, working under appalling conditions to provide life-saving medical assistance to people in need in Gaza. We also offer our condolences to those UN, WHO and healthcare workers who have lost their lives in the current conflict. Thank you.