

73RD SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY – RESUMED

Australia's written statement on Agenda item 13.1

Australia highly values the role of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC) in monitoring the performance of the World Health Organization (WHO) Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) and in aiding transparency.

We appreciate the IOAC's comprehensive report on the overall progress of the Programme to date, including its recommendations, which seek the full implementation of the 2016 reforms, build upon its interim report on WHO's response to COVID-19, and provide future guidance for WHO's emergency work.

The report highlights that human resources remain a challenge for the WHE Programme. We support the IOAC's recommendation to seek to maintain and increase core technical expertise and to leverage in-house experts through internal surge capacity. As highlighted in Australia's submission to the IPPR, we emphasise the need to have the right skills mix in response to specific country needs to complement existing in-country technical capacity.

We also appreciate the recommendation to ensure predictable and flexible funding for the WHE Programme. We note the need to improve alignment of emergency funding streams and clarify which funds should activate when, to help plan emergency responses more efficiently and effectively.

The impact of timely information, and actions to combat misinformation, have been crucial elements of effective responses to COVID-19. We recognise the WHO's normative function in providing authoritative, evidence-based, timely and up-to date information as well as advice to both coordinate the global response and support national responses.

We agree with the recommendation to strengthen the WHE Programme's capacity to provide scientific advice and technical guidance.

We appreciate the IOAC's commitment to work closely with the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response and the Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) during the COVID-19 Response. We encourage the IOAC's continued active engagement in the independent evaluation of the COVID-19 response, and stand ready to contribute and engage in dialogue with the IOAC to support the process.