

**INTERVENTIONS FOR THE RESUMED SESSION OF THE 73RD
WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

**Ministry of Health
Royal Government of Bhutan**

MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION (VIRTUAL):

1. Mr. Tandin Dorji, Offtg. Director General, Department of Medical Services
2. Ambassador Tenzin R. Wangchuk, Permanent Representative to UN, Geneva
3. Mr. Tashi Penjor, Chief Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division
4. Mr. Tandin Dendup, Sr. Planning Officer, Policy and Planning Division
5. Mr. Sangay Phuntsho, Sr. Program Officer, Department of Public Health
6. Mr. Rigtsal Dorji, Second Secretary, PMB Geneva
7. Ms. Jamyang Choden, IHR Focal, Program Officer, Department of Medical Services
8. Mr. Samten Lhendup, Human Resource Officer, Human Resource Division

1. Committee A (Agenda 11.3): Global Vaccines Action Plan

Action Sought by the Assembly on the Agenda Item: Note this report and provide guidance on next steps.

Hon'ble Chair,

- Bhutan notes the WHO Director General's report with concern that most of the global and regional immunization goals set out in the Global Vaccine Action Plan (2011–2020) will not be achieved by 2020.
- Notwithstanding it, we would like to commend the work of the Secretariat and acknowledge their tremendous efforts put into drafting the successor Global Immunisation Strategy 2030. The 2030 strategy, we feel, would be critical in reinforcing the unfinished works to meet the unmet aspirations of Global Vaccine Action Plan (2011-2020).
- Bhutan considers immunisation as a top public health priority and in keeping with this commitment have launched the PCV as a part of the routine immunisation in January 2019. HPV vaccination for boys was also launched in September 2020 as a means to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating cervical cancer. Furthermore, the Flu vaccination for the general population is also set to be rolled out in November 2020 to supplement our ongoing national effort to contain COVID-19.
- With regard to the Immunisation Agenda 2030, on the Strategic Priority Area 3 that is 'Coverage and Equity', Bhutan solicits the support of WHO's leadership and other relevant partners in ensuring that financial barriers to achieve full vaccination are addressed particularly in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Lower Middle Income Countries (LMICs).
- We welcome the IA 2030's ambition to encourage vaccination services throughout the life course of a person, which would be further augmented and guided by data and evidence based decision making.
- Although the prevalence of bacterial meningitis is low in Bhutan, we welcome the idea to address the debilitating socio-economic and health implications of bacterial meningitis through the draft global road map on defeating meningitis.
- In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Bhutan applauds the WHO's noble initiative in starting the global solidarity trial for vaccines and treatment. We are confident that WHO will continue to exert its relevance by playing a critical role through leadership and strategic guidance to ensure that the COVID-19 vaccines, once developed and approved to be administered, would be made extensively available to low income countries for use.

- Bhutan extends our appreciation to the WHO, GAVI and CEPI for your steadfast leadership in initiating the COVAX facility and the GAVI Advanced Market Commitment (AMC) to ensure that global vaccine distribution is equitable and sustainable. We note with appreciation that such initiatives are geared towards ensuring that the high risk groups in the most vulnerable nations are the immediate beneficiaries of eventual COVID-19 vaccines, followed by the rest of the population.

Thank you!

2. Committee A (Agenda 14): International Health Regulations (2005)

Action Sought by the Assembly on the Agenda Item: The Health Assembly is invited to note this report.

Hon'ble Chair,

- Bhutan notes the annual report of the Director General on the implementation of the International Health Regulations 2005.
- We commend the leadership of the WHO Director General in effectively responding to the outbreak of Ebola in Congo and Benin in 2019 and 2020 respectively. We also would like to commend the Director General's leadership and the efforts of the IHR Emergency Committee in effectively handling the outbreaks of vaccine derived poliovirus in different pockets across the globe.
- We are happy to note that the adherence of the member states to the IHR State Parties Annual Report is high, and we request the Secretariat to keep up its stewardship in ensuring enhanced and comprehensive adherence to the SPAR, as these measures are extremely critical in meeting the overall aspirations of the IHR.
- Bhutan notes with concern that in the WHO's analysis of the SPAR report on IHR implementation across its six regions, SEARO has consistently scored low which calls for strengthened emphasis on the region. This is all the more relevant as the SEAR has some of the most densely populated countries in the world.
- Simulation exercises that were conducted just before the international outbreak of the novel coronavirus in early 2020 greatly helped Bhutan to gear up for the actual pandemic, which continues to wreak havoc across the globe even as we speak right now. We commend the WHO's effort in shaping the global response to this pandemic and remain hopeful that the WHO will continue to remain at the forefront of this fight by providing its strategic guidance, assistance and strong stewardship in the future as well.

- Bhutan's response to the pandemic till now, under the selfless and benevolent leadership of His Majesty the King, has been a timely, comprehensive and noteworthy one. However, critical arrangements, particularly in the area of clinical management, testing and effective surveillance had to be made to mount a full fledged national response to the pandemic. Consistent and continued support from the WHO, other UN Specialized Agencies and multilateral donors in terms of both resources and capacity building assistance have been extremely helpful in bolstering our national preparedness and response towards the COVID-19 pandemic. We remain hopeful that such support measures would continue so that our long term preparedness and response towards similar or even deadlier public health emergencies in the future could be further solidified.
- Lastly, Bhutan would like to thank the Regional Director, WHO, SEARO in particular and the World Health Organisation in general for your proactive and timely support in our efforts in combating this deadly pandemic. We wouldn't have been able to forge an effective response without your support and guidance.

Thank you!

3. Committee A (Agenda 12): WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel

Action Sought by the Assembly on the Agenda Item: The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and to consider the draft decisions of the Expert Advisory Group.

Hon'ble Chair,

- Bhutan commends the successful conclusion of the work of the WHO Expert Advisory Group on the Relevance and Effectiveness of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, the leadership of its co-chairs, and the dedication of its distinguished members.
- Bhutan notes with appreciation the report of the WHO Expert Advisory Group and the recommendations therein to further revise the Global Code to make it more relevant and effective to suit the changing scenario of the global health workforce.
- We concur with the EAG's findings on the need to provide further health workforce related support for countries facing significant Health Human Resource challenges.

- We also concur with the EAG's appeal to allocate sufficient funds to support the Secretariat's health workforce activities particularly in countries with limited resources and capacity.
- Bhutan urges all multilateral and bilateral partners to ensure that consistent support is rendered to national health systems of LDCs and LMICs to meet projected tertiary health human resource needs in order to successfully meet the agenda 2030 goals related to health, and also the 13th GPW's triple billion goals.
- We recommend a strengthened and continued knowledge sharing and resource sharing platform and mechanisms in the areas of health and medical education between the more affluent and advanced member states and those that have limited resources.
- Finally, given that the proposed concerns and safeguards are adequately addressed and given the favorable developments surrounding the revision of the WHO Global Code, Bhutan would like to co-sponsor the draft decision.

Thank you!