The Commonwealth of The Bahamas

74th WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (2021)
AGENDA ITEM 17.3/17.4 Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: Implementation of IHR
REFERENCE DOCUMENTS A74/9 A74/9 Add. 1

Madame President

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the risk of international and local spread of disease, a priority for The Bahamas. The International Health Regulations (IHR) has been a guiding mandate for national interface on public health threats posed in the international sphere.

Enhancements in preparedness for health emergencies have occurred since the entering into force of IHR2005. Designation of a National Focal Point, monitoring and sharing as appropriate, alerts received through the EIS, while strengthening IHR core capacities, and adhering to reporting and compliance mechanisms, have bolstered health emergency response preparedness.

Madame President

The first case of COVID-19 recorded in early March 2020 marked our 1st wave. Low numbers attributed allowed ease of managing IHR responsibilities. The second wave however, challenged surveillance and health system capacities. Implementing technological solutions and augmenting human resource capacities for enhanced monitoring and response with the increasing burden of COVID-19 cases, has further strengthened preparedness.

However, sustained surveillance and response, delivery of routine health services in tandem with COVID-care delivery, and COVID-19 vaccination amplification, strains a health system environment fraught with health care provider multi-tasking and a depleted health workforce, particularly in nursing.

Madame President

The Bahamas notes key messages of the Review Committee and recommendations for urgent attention. Elevation of health emergency preparedness and response through strengthened legislation and dedicated funding for enhanced surveillance and response

integration within the broader health system and essential public health functions, is in train.

Madame President

The Bahamas notes the call to establish a new international treaty and the importance of solidarity. We urge the WHO to continue its work for strengthening NFP capacities with clear guidance on the NFP requirements by IHR, taking into context resource disparities across Member States.

Thank you