

Portugal
World Health Organization
77th World Health Assembly

(27th May – 1st June 2024)

Item 14.1 – WHO’s work in health emergencies

Madame Chair,
Director General,
Excellences,

Portugal aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The current global context is problematic and leaves no one indifferent. We face increasing emergencies, whether natural disasters, pandemics, or conflicts, which have devastating consequences, overwhelming health systems, and exacerbating population vulnerabilities. The number of high-level graded emergencies is rising and will require worldwide mobilization to design disruptive sustainable solutions and build coordinated systemic resilience.

The ongoing work within the Global Health architecture, including HEPR framework, INB, the International Health Regulations (IHR) and other WHO initiatives will have a paramount importance in rectifying the shortcomings of the current system. It is paramount to ensure coherent, agile, and equitable preparedness and response capacities on a global scale. Portugal praises the efforts made by the WHO and all Parties so far and commends for a constructive dialogue looking ahead, to create strong legal and regulatory frameworks related to emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

It is also imperative to overcome the chronic underfunding of the health sector, both for emergency and non-emergency periods. This can be achieved by bolstering communication amongst Health and Finance leaders, as well as by supporting agile resource mobilization instruments such as the *Contingency Fund for Emergencies*.

Chair,

In this context, we acknowledge the Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHPR) that is further endorsed by this Health Assembly. This tool, albeit in its pilot phase, has the potential to assist countries in mapping and coordinating their resources and capacities, assessing vulnerabilities, upscaling practices and building support networks. The preliminary conclusions of the pilot phase are encouraging. Immediate results include empowering ministries of health to be more focal and focused on PPPR while serving as a global multilateral platform for collaborative engagement.

We urge all member states to engage constructively with the UHPR, consider volunteering to participate in it, and help build this mechanism forward to enhance emergency preparedness and response capacities, in synergy with other tools, ensuring that nations are better equipped to face future challenges.

We also request the Director General to be diligent in equipping the UHPR programme with proper resources and staff, to guarantee that the secretariat can develop what is requested of it in the approved Decision. We will never fully grasp this tool's potential if we do not provide sufficient resources for the secretariat's efforts. Portugal has been supporting additional voluntary donations and expects these contributions to be used effectively.

Health emergencies know no borders, and our response must be equally unbounded. Dialogue and cooperation across sectors and nations are therefore essential to manage and mitigate the impact of the current and future crises effectively.

Thank you.