

**Statement of I.R. Iran on:
Strengthening diagnostic capacity (resolution WHA76.5 (2023))**

In line with the recommendations of the Diagnostic Capacity Strengthening Framework, which focuses on creating a global laboratory network and providing accessible, high-quality rapid diagnostic devices, the Islamic Republic of Iran, has established the country's molecular diagnostic network as a successful initiative in building diagnostic infrastructure for managing crises.

This effort emerged to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the capacity for conducting molecular tests for the coronavirus, which initially was limited to only two laboratories, but was rapidly expanded. Currently, over 170 laboratories, capable of conducting molecular tests for COVID-19. Those are operating across 64 universities in the public sector under the supervision of Ministry of Health and Medical Education.

This capacity can now serve as a strategic resource and sustainable capacity to combat biological threats, emerging and re-emerging pathogens. In this regard, in order to support priority pathogens included in the syndromic surveillance system, the scope of diagnostic testing has expanded from COVID-19 to other pathogens that pose potential biological threats, including influenza, CCHF, Dengue fever, Chikungunya, and Monkeypox, across selected universities.

Despite the expansion of diagnostic molecular network in Iran, challenges remain in preserving and enhancing the existing diagnostic network. Those challenges are probably applicable to many developing countries. In this context, we would like to request WHO support in the following areas:

1. Establishment of a genomic and metagenomics surveillance system by providing equipment and consumables necessary for development.
2. Strengthening the capacity of national reference laboratories to enable those to participate in specialized proficiency testing programs.
3. Expanding diagnostic services for early detection of diseases with epidemic potential through rapid diagnostic tests with good performance and low cost, and ensuring access to those services at country's points of entry during large mass gatherings.
4. Producing reference materials and standards for the validation of domestic diagnostic systems and tests.
5. Strengthening the sample shipment system by vehicles equipped with cold chain preservation equipment and smart, traceable systems.
6. Utilizing a community-based surveillance system for early diagnosis at home with rapid tests

The requested measures can help strengthen diagnostic capabilities and improve responses to public health emergencies both nationally and globally