

Trinidad and Tobago Intervention
under Item 13.2 – Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)
79th World Health Assembly, 18 to 23 May 2026

Thank you, Chair.

Trinidad and Tobago continues to take steps in order to enhance implementation of the IHRs (2005), through strengthening core capacities for surveillance, preparedness and response, and reviewing national frameworks in light of updated IHR requirements, capacities, and any relevant considerations arising from the 2024 amendments.

The smaller and more vulnerable health systems of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) can benefit from the following:

1. The enhancement of Health Management Information Systems (HMIS) and integration of Laboratory Information Systems into existing HMIS, where absent;
2. Enhanced detection for Mpox, COVID-19, Hantavirus or any other potential Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), by lowering the threshold for relevant screening/investigation through ongoing sensitisation activities for general populations and medical staff;
3. Strengthening Early Warning and/or Event-Based Surveillance capacity, with emphasis on improved timeliness and robustness of verification activities for events of national or potentially international concern; and
4. Enhanced ease of access to genomic sequencing for relevant PHEIC.

With respect to the 3rd element – Strengthening Early Warning and/or Event-Based Surveillance capacity, although Member States are required to report events that may constitute a potential PHEIC, on a micro level not all symptomatic individuals report the same to their medical practitioners. This gap in surveillance can be mitigated by way of national legislation.

Trinidad and Tobago's 2023 SPAR results speak of challenges of legal instruments to support IHR implementation and also challenges with respect to radiation emergencies, chemical events, financing, human resources, infection prevention and control, zoonotic diseases and food safety. On a national level, these areas can be improved upon to meet international standards.

Some key ways in which Trinidad and Tobago may further strengthen its implementation of the IHR include:

- Conducting training to facilitate the efficient capture of data at testing points;
- Developing a comprehensive Human Resource Plan for developing surge capacity for responding to public health emergencies and addressing employment contracts and expanding Human Resources for Health with a specific focus on the continuity of employment;

- Strengthening collaboration with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) and other key stakeholders to critically review and develop an overall system with clear procedures for managing the flow of persons entering through both official and unofficial points of entry taking communicable diseases into consideration;
- Resourcing and implementing the mental health policy (2019-2029);
- Strengthening national capacity by enhancing laboratory capacity for the early detection of pathogens of epidemic/pandemic potential;
- Having a One Health approach to surveillance and reporting systems;
- Promoting research to accompany/support outbreak investigations, disease surveillance, genomics and bioinformatics;
- Elevating community engagement, that is, involving them in health initiatives to raise awareness and foster trust in measures taken by the health authorities;
- Developing mechanisms for knowledge transfer between islands and among stakeholders; and
- Developing/implementing information systems/information technology (IS/IT) support to automate response activities such as contact tracing.

In this regard, the continued work of the WHO Secretariat in providing sustained support to Member States, specifically as it pertains to surveillance, training and knowledge transfer, would be important. We would also welcome the support of the Secretariat in the review and oversight of the implementation of prioritised recommendations over the immediate to mid-term.

I thank you.