Never before has the world been so clearly forewarned of the dangers of a devastating pandemic, nor previously had the knowledge, resources and technologies to deal with such a threat. Yet, never before has the world witnessed a pandemic of such widespread and destructive social and economic impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a collective failure to take pandemic prevention, preparedness and response seriously and prioritize it accordingly. It has demonstrated the fragility of highly interconnected economies and social systems, and the fragility of trust. It has exploited and exacerbated the fissures within societies and among nations. It has exploited inequalities, reminding us in no uncertain terms that there is no health security without social security. COVID-19 has taken advantage of a world in disorder.

The last century has witnessed numerous developments and innovations that have improved and prolonged lives the world over. But the same advances have also created unprecedented vulnerability to fast moving infectious disease outbreaks by fueling population growth and mobility, disorienting the climate, boosting interdependence, and generating inequality. The destruction of tropical rain forests has increased the opportunities for transmission of viruses from wild animals to humans. We have created a world where a shock anywhere can become a catastrophe everywhere, while growing nationalism and populism undermine our shared peace, prosperity and security. Infectious diseases feed off divisiveness; societal divisions can be deadly.
As the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) noted last year, pathogens thrive in disruption and disorder. COVID-19 has proven the point. Where sufficient resources, cooperation, and organization were applied, it was slowed. Where disarray, division and poverty reign, it has thrived.

In issuing its warning in last year’s inaugural report, the GPMB stressed the inadequacy of systems and financing required to detect and respond to health emergencies. As COVID-19 has proven, these systems remain dangerously deficient and under-resourced. This pandemic has also called out the human dimensions of health security, the actions of leaders and citizens that are so critical to vigorous preparedness and response.

Our report this year highlights responsible leadership and citizenship, as well as the adequacy of systems and resources, as key factors for success. It puts a special emphasis on the factor that binds these four elements together into an effective whole: the principles and values of governance that ensure the right choices, decisions and actions are taken at the right time. It points out that none are safe until all are safe and calls for a renewed commitment to multilateralism and to WHO and the multilateral system.

The pandemic is far from over. Some countries have been relatively successful in suppressing the virus, protecting their populations, saving millions of lives. Others have not. Close to a million lives have been lost to COVID-19. The devastating economic and societal impact of COVID-19 reminds us, yet again, of the centrality of investment in pandemic preparedness to human security, and the need to reconsider how national security budgets are spent.

We have already learned many crucial lessons that demand immediate action if we are to say with any confidence, “never again”. But learning without action is pointless, and unsustained commitment is futile. As we warned in our last report, “For too long, we have allowed a cycle of panic and neglect when it comes to pandemics: we ramp up efforts when there is a serious threat, then quickly forget about them when the threat subsides.”

Again, we say: “It is well past time to act.” And we identify the commitments and actions leaders and citizens must take - boldly, decisively, immediately, and with new energy animated by the grim recognition that inaction kills.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In our 2019 Annual Report, ‘A World at Risk’, we warned of the very real threat of ‘a rapidly spreading pandemic due to a lethal respiratory pathogen’, and the need for determined political leadership at national and global levels. We called for seven urgent actions to prepare the world for health emergencies:

- Heads of government must commit and invest
- Countries and regional organizations must lead by example
- All countries must build strong systems
- Countries, donors and multilateral institutions must be prepared for the worst
- Financing institutions must link preparedness with financial risk planning
- Development assistance funders must create incentives and increase funding for preparedness
- The United Nations must strengthen coordination mechanisms

Progress in implementing these actions has been limited. It is not as if the world has lacked the opportunity to take these steps. There have been numerous calls for action in these areas over the last decade, yet none have generated the changes needed. Financial and political investments in preparedness have been insufficient, and we are all paying the price.
**LESSONS LEARNED FROM COVID-19**

**Political leadership makes the difference.** Effective leaders act decisively, on the basis of science, evidence and best practice, and in the interests of people. Emergency response is not a choice between protecting people and protecting the economy; public health action is the quickest way to end the threat and return to productivity and security.

**Preparedness is not only what governments do to protect their people, it is also what people do to protect each other.** In the absence of an effective vaccine or treatment, individual behaviours have never been more important. Citizens can protect one another and demonstrate social and moral responsibility by acting in the best interests of all.

**The impact of pandemics goes far beyond their immediate health effects.** In addition to its immediate death toll, COVID-19 will be remembered for its rapid global spread and devastating social and economic impact, especially for the vulnerable and disadvantaged. It has demonstrated the importance of protecting lives and livelihoods, and widening our understanding of preparedness to make education, social and economic sectors “pandemic proof”.

**Current measures of preparedness are not predictive.** Our understanding of pandemic preparedness has been inadequate. National measures of preparedness have not predicted the effectiveness of countries’ response in stopping viral spread and saving lives, and the critical importance of social protection has been neglected. The ultimate test of preparedness is response.

**The return on investment for global health security is immense.** Expenditures for prevention and preparedness are measured in billions of dollars, the cost of a pandemic in trillions. It would take 500 years to spend as much on investing in preparedness as the world is losing due to COVID-19.

Development assistance is an inadequate model for financing this investment; preparedness is the responsibility of all countries, and requires long term, predictable, flexible and sustained financing on a much greater scale, based on global solidarity. Global health security cannot continue to rely on financing based on a small number of generous countries, foundations, and development banks.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Costs of COVID-19</th>
<th>Investments in preparedness</th>
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<td>• Over US$ 11 trillion, and counting, to fund the response</td>
<td>• Additional US$ 5 per person annually</td>
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<td>• Future loss of US$ 10 trillion in earnings</td>
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**No one is safe until all are safe.** Global preparedness is not simply the sum of national preparedness. A pandemic is, by definition, a global event and as such demands collective global action. The multilateral system exists to support that action. Where it is weak, it needs strengthening, not abandoning. The world of pandemic preparedness is already complex. It needs consolidation, not further fragmentation.
CALL TO ACTION

The GPMB calls for urgent actions to strengthen the current response to COVID-19 and better prepare the world for future pandemics and health emergencies; to bring order out of catastrophe and chaos.

1. Responsible leadership

2. Engaged citizenship

3. Strong and agile national and global systems for global health security

4. Sustained investment in prevention and preparedness, commensurate with the scale of a pandemic threat

5. Robust global governance of preparedness for health emergencies

We call for responsible leadership

Urgent Actions:

• National leaders and leaders of international organizations and other stakeholders take early decisive action based on science, evidence and best practice when confronted with health emergencies. They discourage the politicization of measures to protect public health, ensure social protection and promote national unity and global solidarity.

• We reiterate our call for heads of government to appoint a national high-level coordinator with the authority and political accountability to lead whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, and routinely conduct multisectoral simulation exercises to establish and maintain effective preparedness.

• National leaders, manufacturers and international organizations ensure that COVID-19 vaccines and other countermeasures are allocated in a way that will have the most impact in stopping the pandemic, that access is fair and equitable, and not based on ability to pay, with healthcare workers and the most vulnerable having priority access. Each country should get an initial allocation of vaccine sufficient to cover at least 2% of its population, to cover frontline healthcare workers.

We call for engaged citizenship

Urgent Actions:

• Citizens demand accountability from their governments for health emergency preparedness, which requires that governments empower their citizens and strengthen civil society.

• Every individual takes responsibility for seeking and using accurate information to educate themselves, their families and their communities. They adopt health-promoting behaviours and take actions to protect the most vulnerable. They advocate for these actions within their communities.
We call for strong and agile national and global systems for global health security

Urgent Actions:

- **Heads of government** strengthen national systems for preparedness: identifying, predicting and detecting the emergence of pathogens with pandemic potential based on a ‘One Health’ approach that integrates animal and human health; building core public health capacities and workforce for surveillance, early detection and sharing of information on outbreaks and similar events; strengthening health systems based on universal health coverage with surge capacity for clinical and supportive services; and putting in place systems of social protection to safeguard the vulnerable, leaving no one behind.

- **Researchers, research institutions, research funders, the private sector, governments, the World Health Organization and international organizations** improve coordination and support for research and development in health emergencies and establish a sustainable mechanism to ensure rapid development, early availability, effective and equitable access to novel vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and non-pharmaceutical interventions for health emergencies, including capacity for testing, scaled manufacturing and distribution.

- **Heads of government** renew their commitment to the multilateral system and strengthen WHO as an impartial and independent international organization, responsible for directing and coordinating pandemic preparedness and response.

We call for sustained investment in prevention and preparedness, commensurate with the scale of a pandemic threat

Urgent Actions:

- **G20 leaders** ensure that adequate finance is made available now to mitigate the current and future economic and socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic.

- **Heads of government** protect and sustain the financing of their national capacities for health emergency preparedness and response developed for COVID-19, beyond the current pandemic.

- **The United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the International Financing Institutions** develop a mechanism for sustainable financing of global health security, which mobilizes resources on the scale and within the timeframe required, is not reliant on development assistance, recognizes preparedness as a global common good, and is not at the mercy of political and economic cycles.

- **The World Bank and other International Financial Institutions (IFI)** make research and development (R&D) investments eligible for IFI financing and develop mechanisms to provide financing for global R&D for health emergencies.
We call for robust global governance of preparedness for health emergencies

Urgent Actions:

- **States Parties to the International Health Regulations (IHR), or the WHO Director-General**, propose amendments of the IHR to the World Health Assembly, to include: strengthening early notification and comprehensive information sharing; intermediate grading of health emergencies; development of evidence-based recommendations on the role of domestic and international travel and trade recommendations; and mechanisms for assessing IHR compliance and core capacity implementation, including a universal, periodic, objective and external review mechanism.

- **National leaders, the World Health Organization, the United Nations and other international organizations** develop predictive mechanisms for assessing multisectoral preparedness, including simulations and exercises that test and demonstrate the capacity and agility of health emergency preparedness systems, and their functioning within societies.

- **The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, and the heads of International Financing Institutions** convene a UN Summit on Global Health Security, with the aim of agreeing on an international framework for health emergency preparedness and response, incorporating the IHR, and including mechanisms for sustainable financing, research and development, social protection, equitable access to countermeasures for all, and mutual accountability.

Conclusion & commitment

**The COVID-19 pandemic is providing a harsh test of the world’s preparedness.** The Board concludes that little progress has been made on any of the actions called for in last year’s report and that this lack of leadership is exacerbating the pandemic. Failure to learn the lessons of COVID-19 or to act on them with the necessary resources and commitment will mean that the next pandemic, which is sure to come, will be even more damaging.

**We recognize that the GPMB must also change.** Our monitoring and advocacy for preparedness must better reflect the contribution of sectors other than health, the importance of social protection, and be based on improved and predictive measures of preparedness.

**GPMB Commitment**

**As the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, we pledge** to support good governance of global health security by fulfilling our mandate to independently monitor preparedness across all sectors and stakeholders, report regularly on progress, and continuously advocate for effective action.
The GPMB is an independent monitoring and accountability body to ensure preparedness for global health crises, co-convened by WHO and the World Bank. The Board provides an independent and comprehensive appraisal for leaders, key policy makers and the world on system-wide progress towards increased preparedness and response capacity for disease outbreaks and other emergencies with health consequences. The Board monitors and reports on the state of global preparedness across all sectors and stakeholders, including the UN system, government, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector.

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