

144th IPU Assembly

Nusa Dua, Indonesia
20-24 March 2022



Workshop *Never again – Strengthening health security preparedness during COVID-19 recovery and beyond*

Organized jointly by the IPU and WHO
Tuesday, 22 March 2022, 11:00 – 13:00
Medan, first Floor, BICC

Concept note

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed a widespread lack of preparedness with devastating consequences for all segments of society. It revealed that every country was vulnerable and that no country or institution had all the capacities required for a comprehensive response. As countries struggle to control the pandemic and address its social and economic impacts, urgent preventative strategies and sustained political commitment at the highest level are needed if future pandemics are to be avoided.

As could be seen since the 1918 Spanish flu, the momentum generated by public health outbreaks and pandemics quickly dwindles once the event is controlled, but to do so countries must be better prepared to break the cycle of panic and neglect. Health security means making certain that a country has the health system structure, capacity and means to look after its own population's health and to respond to the emergence of known and unknown health risks. To achieve health security, adequate preparedness is essential which in turn requires the capacity to detect risks, create surge capacity in health facilities, ensure an adequate stockpile of essential drugs, vaccines, and medical equipment; and to deploy a coordinated series of responses across all affected sectors. In an inter-connected world, a lack of preparedness in one country puts all countries at risk. Health security preparedness and recovery plans post-COVID-19 must comprehensively consider investments across sectors to ensure countries are in a position to address emerging risks and future emergencies.

At the global level, important instruments already exist to support countries' efforts. The International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) provide the legal framework defining countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders. **The IHR are legally binding for all countries and as such require that countries establish and maintain core capacities for surveillance and response to public health risks and emergencies. However, the efficacy of the IHR depends on implementation. Legislation and financing are key elements in such implementation and, as such, require leadership from parliamentarians.** The legal frameworks that are needed to establish a health system and facilitate its governance, as well as to enable a flexible, proportional, and multisectoral response, will not be effective if there is insufficient capacity and resources for them to be implemented successfully and sustainably.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted that preparedness is a global challenge and that there are major gaps in international solidarity and sharing, including the sharing of pathogen data and epidemiological information, of resources, technology and tools, such as vaccines and other countermeasures. **There is therefore a need for a new convention, agreement, or other international instrument to enhance pandemic prevention, preparedness and response to address future public health risks.** The world needs a transformed global health system built fundamentally on the principles of equity and an unbreakable chain of detection and protection coordinated at the national and global level to protect people and communities everywhere. Presently negotiations are underway on drafting a World Health Organization (WHO) convention, agreement, or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The WHO is also piloting the Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHDR) initiative – a voluntary mechanism of peer-to-peer review on the model of the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) – to promote greater, more effective international cooperation by bringing nations and stakeholders together in a spirit of solidarity.

All key stakeholders, including parliaments, will play a critical role in ensuring that commitments turn into actions and that laws, policies, strategies, and financing are in place for the effective, efficient and transparent implementation of such commitments. Communication and collaboration between the legislative and executive branches of government are required. Parliaments and parliamentarians also play a key role in promoting more effective international cooperation by bringing nations and stakeholders together in a spirit of solidarity.

As part of their long-standing collaboration, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the WHO are organizing this side-event to raise awareness among parliamentarians on the need to strengthen Health Security Preparedness through a new international instrument and better implementation of the existing IHR as a legal instrument. A new IPU-WHO handbook for parliamentarians will also be launched in the context of the 144th IPU Assembly. The aim of the handbook is to introduce parliamentarians to the concept and importance of health security and the IHR and explore the functions and opportunities they can use to advance preparedness.

The objectives of the side event are to:

- Raise awareness on the IPU-WHO Handbook for parliamentarians, the IHR, and the role of parliaments in strengthening health emergency preparedness; and highlight practical opportunities for parliaments to take action at the country level in the context of medium-term preparedness and post-COVID-19 recovery.
- Brief parliaments on the ongoing process towards a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response and what it means in the context of countries' efforts to address the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and build back better.
- Promote dialogue between parliamentarians, ministries of health and the WHO for enhanced cooperation to strengthen pandemic preparedness and response.

Expected outcomes

- Increase awareness of how to use the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to build parliamentary engagement for health security preparedness.
- Initiate discussions on how to meaningfully integrate IHR implementation as a key component of health security preparedness and COVID-19 recovery, and on capacities needed by parliaments to support this process.
- Identify opportunities for parliamentarians' contribution to the future global process of strengthening health emergency preparedness and response.

Agenda

Moderator: Dr. Gaudenz Silberschmidt, Director Health and Multilateral Partnership, WHO

Time 11:00 – 13:00 (2 hours)	Agenda Item
Welcome addresses	
11:00 – 11:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO • Ms. Puan Maharani, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Indonesia (TBC) • Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU
Learning from COVID-19: Preparedness, preparedness, preparedness	
11:15 – 11:45	Dr. Jaouad Mahjour, Assistant Director-General, Emergency Preparedness, WHO Followed by Q&A
Stepping up to the challenge: How can parliaments make a difference in their country's safety and prosperity?	
11:45 – 12:50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Stella Chungong, Director, Health Security Preparedness, WHO • Ministry of Health representative (TBD) • Member of Parliament (TBD) Followed by interactive discussion with all participants
Closing	
12:50 – 13:00	Dr. Jaouad Mahjour, Assistant Director-General, Emergency Preparedness, WHO