



WHO STATEMENT TO THE 2019 GLOBAL PLATFORM FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Chair, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to address the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction on behalf of the World Health Organization, the United Nations specialized agency for health.

WHO is working with Member States, local actors and partners, to ensure that the health risks and outcomes, biological hazards, health sector plans and the implementation of the IHR are central to all national and local disaster risk management strategies, to enable the achievement of Sendai Framework Target E, which is a key theme of this Global Platform.

From our experience of working with countries and partners to reduce the health risks and consequences of all types of emergencies, collective action within and across all sectors are required to support countries and communities to implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Sustainable Development Goals, Paris Agreement on Climate Change, International Health Regulations (2005) and other global and regional frameworks.

This is a recurring lesson learnt from our response and readiness actions for large-scale emergencies around the world including Ebola Viral Disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh and in countries experiencing health challenges in conflicts.

In response to all these challenges, WHO has launched the ground-breaking Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (EDRM) Framework at this Global Platform. The vision of the Framework is to achieve “the highest possible standard of health and well-being for all people at risk of emergencies, and stronger community and country resilience, health security, universal health coverage and sustainable development”. The Framework brings together humanitarian action, preparedness and response for epidemics and other health emergencies, operational readiness, multisectoral disaster management and health systems strengthening into a common and inclusive approach. It promotes and enables the entire health system and the whole of society to contribute to the reduction of health risks and consequences from emergencies and disasters. The Framework is also central to the implementation of the 3 pillars of the WHO Global Programme of Work – it draws on the protection of 1 billion people better protected from emergencies, 1 billion people enjoying better health and well-being and 1 billion people benefitting from universal health coverage.

The Framework puts emphasis on country governance and communities, and particularly meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations, including women,

children, people with disabilities, older persons, displaced populations including refugee and migrants, indigenous communities, and people with chronic diseases who face the greatest risk from hazards. It is important that decisions and actions related to the Health EDRM are founded on 'health as a human right' and guided by ethics and evidence; this calls for greater investment in risk information, research and innovation.

The Global Platform provides the opportunity to highlight the progress that countries and regions have been making in managing the health risks of emergencies and disasters, aligning with the IHR (2005). This includes the preparedness and readiness of health systems with a focus on countries with high vulnerabilities, e.g. improving epidemic intelligence, risk communication, emergency medical teams, and mental health and psychosocial support. Recent practical steps include PAHO's Disability Inclusion in Hospital Disaster Risk Management (INGRID-H), advancing operational readiness and response to the Ebola outbreak in the DRC and neighbouring countries, and the establishment of the WHO Thematic Platform for Health EDRM Research Network. WHO has also developed guidance and tools to assist the health sector to strengthen reporting against the Sendai Framework and SDG targets. Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are implementing the Smart Hospitals Initiative which combines efforts to reduce disaster risk and climate change adaptation and mitigation. It emphasizes improving hospitals' resilience, strengthening infrastructure and operations, and providing green technologies to reduce energy consumption which will help to reduce the health sector carbon footprint and provide hospitals with energy autonomy, allowing them to continue operations during and after emergencies.

WHO Country and Regional Offices, Headquarters and technical programmes, including the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, are working together to help countries, and to coordinate international action, to prevent, prepare for, detect, rapidly respond to, and recover from outbreaks and emergencies. There is an increasing emphasis on integrating Health EDRM with the strengthening of health systems to achieve Universal Health Coverage, health security, and community resilience.

WHO counts on all partners including donors to continue their support to Member States to reduce health risks and consequences of emergencies in communities. WHO will strengthen our collaboration with the UN system including the CADRI Partnership, public, private, academic and non-government sectors to implement the Health EDRM Framework and to protect people's health and well-being from emergencies, for sustainable development and the benefit of today's and future generations.

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