

Strengthening national health emergency and disaster management capacities and resilience of health systems

The Executive Board,

RECOMMENDS to the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA58.1 on health action in relation to crises and disasters, and WHA59.22 on emergency preparedness and response, resolution WHA61.19 on climate change and health, and other World Health Assembly and Regional Committee resolutions and action plans, inter alia, on health security and the International Health Regulations (2005), as well as on pandemic preparedness, safe hospitals and other matters related to emergencies and disasters at local, subnational and national levels;

Recalling United Nations' General Assembly resolution 60/195, which endorsed the Hyogo Declaration and the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters, as well as resolutions 61/198, 62/192, 63/216, 64/200 and 64/251, which, inter alia, called upon Member States to increase efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework, to strengthen risk-reduction and emergency preparedness measures at all levels, and to encourage the international community and relevant United Nations' entities to support national efforts aimed at strengthening capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters;

Reaffirming that countries have responsibility for ensuring the protection of the health, safety and welfare of their people and for ensuring the resilience and self-reliance of the health system, which is critical for minimizing health hazards and vulnerabilities and delivering effective response and recovery in emergencies and disasters;

Regretting the tragic and enormous loss of life, injuries, disease and disabilities resulting from emergencies, disasters and crises of all descriptions;

Mindful that emergencies and disasters also result in damage and destruction of hospitals and other health infrastructure, weakened ability of health systems to deliver health services;

and setbacks for health development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

Expressing deep concern that continuing poverty, increasing urbanization and climate change are expected to increase the health risks and impacts of emergencies and disasters on many countries and communities;

Acknowledging that most action to manage the risks to health from natural, biological, technological and societal hazards, including the immediate emergency response, are provided by local- and country-level actors across all health disciplines, including mass casualty management, mental health and noncommunicable diseases, communicable diseases, environmental health, maternal and newborn health, reproductive health, and nutrition and other cross-cutting health issues;

Recognizing the contribution of other sectors and disciplines to the health and well-being of people at risk of emergencies and disasters, including local government, planners, architects, engineers, emergency services and civil protection, and academia;

Concerned that country and community capacities to manage major emergencies and disasters are often overwhelmed, and that coordination, communications and logistics are often revealed as the weakest aspects of health emergency management;

Appreciating that some countries, including those with low income or emerging country development status, have reduced mortality and morbidity in disaster situations due to their investment in emergency and disaster risk-reduction measures, with the support of local, regional and global partners;

Recognizing that WHO plays an important role as a member of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction system and as the health cluster lead in the framework of humanitarian reform, and works closely with other members of the international community, such as the United Nations Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, UNDP, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and other nongovernmental organizations, on supporting country capacity development and developing institutional capacities for multisectoral emergency and disaster risk-management, which includes disaster risk-reduction;

Building on the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the 2008–2009 World Disaster Reduction Campaign on Hospitals Safe from Disasters, the 2010–2011 Campaign on Disaster Resilient Cities, World Health Day 2008 on Climate Change and Health, World Health Day 2009 on Hospitals Safe in Emergencies, and World Health Day 2010 on Urban Health Matters, which have resulted in local, subnational, national and global action on reducing risks to health from emergencies and disasters;

Recognizing that improved health outcomes from emergencies and disasters require urgent additional action at country, regional and global levels to ensure that the local, subnational and national health risk-reduction and overall response in emergencies and disasters are timely and effective and that health services remain operational when they are most needed, in this respect bearing in mind that emergencies and disasters affect men and women differently,

1. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to strengthen all-hazards health emergency and disaster risk-management programmes (including disaster risk-reduction, emergency preparedness and response)² as part of national and subnational health systems, supported by legislation, regulations and other measures, to improve health outcomes, reduce mortality and morbidity, protect investment in health infrastructure and strengthen the resilience of the health system and society at large, and mainstream a gender perspective into all phases of these programmes;

(2) to integrate all-hazards health emergency and disaster risk-management programmes (including disaster risk-reduction) into national or subnational health plans and institutionalize capacities for coordinated health and multisectoral action to assess risks, proactively reduce risks, and prepare for, respond to, and recover from, emergencies, disasters and other crises;

(3) to develop safe and prepared hospitals programmes which ensure that new hospitals and health facilities are located and built safely so as to withstand local hazards, that the safety of existing facilities is assessed and remedial action is taken, and that all health facilities are prepared to respond to internal and external emergencies;

(4) to promote regional and subregional collaboration, including sharing of experience and expertise for capacity development, in risk-reduction, response and recovery;

(5) to strengthen the role of the local health workforce in the health emergency management system to provide local leadership and health services, through enhanced planning, training, and access to other resources;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to ensure that WHO at all levels has enhanced capacity and resources, and optimizes its expertise across all disciplines in the Organization, in order to provide the necessary technical guidance and support to Member States and partners, for developing health emergency and disaster risk-management programmes at national, subnational and local levels;

(2) to strengthen collaboration with and ensure coherence and complementarity of actions with those of relevant entities, including public, private, nongovernmental and academia, to support country and community health emergency and disaster risk-management, which includes disaster risk-reduction, as well as ongoing efforts by Member States to implement the International Health Regulations (2005);

(3) to strengthen the evidence base for health emergency and disaster risk-management including operational research and economic assessments;

¹ And regional economic integration organizations as appropriate.

² Health emergency and disaster risk-management includes all measures to assess risks, proactively reduce risks, prepare for, respond to, and recover from, emergencies, disasters and other crises.

(4) to support national and subnational assessments of risks and capacities for health emergency and disaster risk-management, as a basis for catalysing action and strengthening national and subnational health emergency and disaster risk-management capacities, including disaster risk-reduction;

(5) to report to the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly through the Executive Board at its 132nd session, on progress made in the fulfilment of this resolution;

3. CALLS UPON Member States, donors and development cooperation partners to allocate sufficient resources for health emergency and disaster risk-management programmes and partners through international cooperation for development, humanitarian appeals, and support for the World Health Organization's role in all international health related matters.

Tenth meeting, 21 January 2011
EB128/SR/10

= = =