

13.2 WHO's work in health emergencies

MMI, supported by PHM, welcomes this opportunity to address the WHA on agenda item 13.2.

The Covid-19 pandemic illustrates the importance of building an effective system to manage global health emergencies. A well-funded WHO is key to such a system. As the UN agency for health, WHO is uniquely able to deliver the normative guidance and oversight needed for democratic pandemic governance based on international solidarity.

Regarding A73/10, several recommendations in the IOAC interim report stress WHO's importance in coordinating global efforts to handle major public health threats, e.g. through the establishment of an appropriate multilateral governance mechanism for ensuring equitable access to therapeutics and vaccines for all countries, and their effective delivery and stewardship.

Regarding IHR, and recalling resolution EB146.R10, we call on WHO and MS to ensure that the IHR provisions are implemented in a spirit of solidarity, where all MS fully comply and contribute to the best of their capacities.

WHO and its mechanisms and governing bodies shall remain the key decision-makers for governing global health emergencies. Mechanisms that transfer decision-making competences to outside bodies such as public-private partnerships or global health initiatives, however well intended they might be, will compromise the democratic basis of the WHO, marginalise less powerful states in the international system, and lead to conflicts of interest.

Noting report A73/INF./4, and particularly section 9, we expect the Independent Panel to confirm that there is no need to establish any parallel "Global Health Emergency Board" or similar body.

Unfortunately, the World Health Emergencies Programme is a good example of a successful WHO mechanism that is undermined by poor funding. WHO's crucial work in this area must be safeguarded through increasing assessed contributions and decreasing its dependence on earmarked voluntary contributions, through which non-state actors shape WHO's priorities.