
World Health Organization
148th session of the Executive Board, 18–26 January 2021

Item 14.1 and 14.2 - COVID-19 Response and WHO's Work in Health Emergencies

Thank you moderator,

Director General, Member States, Excellencies,

One year ago, the world as we knew it changed forever. Now more than ever in the history of public health, coordination, cooperation, and collaboration have been vital in minimizing the damage to health systems, economies, and of course the individuals affected by this outbreak.

First we must stop and acknowledge all the front-line workers, from EMTs, Paramedics, Pharmacists, Nurses, and Doctors, to cleaners, orderlies, caregivers, social workers, drivers, IT and security personnel, and everyone else whose work has been integral in dealing with the pandemic.

During the last year, the State of Israel has been grateful and proud of the work we have done with the WHO in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. When countries share data and best practices, we ensure that professional, advisory organizations such as the WHO have the tools their experts need most to help guide our health systems in dealing with the pandemics of this scare. The WHO's publishing of hundreds of COVID-19 related guidance materials have been invaluable to Israel and our partners in managing our pandemic response, and the transparent, evidenced-based information has been especially important.

Going forward, it is important to ensure that we continue to strengthen the systems set up during this pandemic, including early detection, verification, and warning of novel virus strains, and data-sharing and reporting mechanisms. The WHO serves as the nucleus of world health, and the organization must be able to disseminate accurate information, worldwide, as soon as the data is available, to ensure maximum efficiency in dealing with any health crises in the future.

We must also remember, while thanks to the efforts of biologists, chemists, geneticists, pharmacologists, and doctors worldwide have given us hope that the pandemic may soon be behind us, even in Israel, where we have vaccinated over 2 million residents. We also have a vested interest in ensuring the vaccination of the population of the Palestinian Authority, while assuring The Palestinian Authority maintains its own fully functioning health system.

We must not allow pandemic fatigue to negatively impact our decision making. We are actively sharing the knowledge we gain from this process with WHO and other countries.

The WHO has also been integral in ensuring that not only do we not fall into pandemic fatigue, but that we also don't become too pandemic-focused, and we must continue working to ensure that all essential health services are supported even during these trying times.

Lastly, as countries prepare for vaccinating their populations, we will again be fighting against misinformation and uncertainty. The WHO will play an important role in advising all countries on managing potential anti-vax movements with positive messages and transparent, data-based information campaigns. The end is in sight, and we must continue our important cooperation to get there.

Thank you.