

Global Health Council Statement on WHA Agenda Item 11.2 Public health preparedness and response

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Global Health Council welcomes WHO's continued efforts to strengthen its role in public health preparedness and response. The prominence of WHO Health Emergencies program in Director-General Tedros' Global Programme of Work places the right level of importance on the critical role that WHO has during a global health emergency.

Since the Ebola outbreak in 2014, the global community has stepped up to strengthen country capacity to prevent, detect and respond to disease outbreaks. The quick declaration of an Ebola outbreak in the DRC this week demonstrates that WHO is more willing and better prepared to rapidly mobilize and scale up resources to successfully contain outbreaks rather than waiting weeks. And the report of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergency Program released this week, notes that 22 priority countries are receiving support to develop workforces and strengthen early detection capacities and national surveillance systems, among other activities.

However, much work still remains to be done. More than 70 countries have completed the Joint External Evaluation process. However, there remain critical questions in how to implement and finance the resulting national action plans that address gaps identified in the JEEs, and ultimately bring more countries in compliance with the International Health Regulations.

GHC recommends that a concerted effort be made to accelerate global health security efforts. As such, GHC recommends that WHO continue to provide support to countries to develop costed and financed national action plans that strengthen health systems and other core capacities needed to prevent, detect and respond to a health emergency. In addition, WHO and other international donors need to be a catalyst to fully fund these plans. While it's sometimes difficult to address the funding dilemma, we all recognize the next outbreak is not a matter of if, but when, and making the financial down payment now will pay in dividends later with fewer lives lost and less social and economic instability.