

World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)



Constituency statement to the WHO Executive Board 152 (Jan-Feb 2023) submitted by:

- FDI World Dental Federation
- FIP International Pharmaceutical Federation
- ICN International Council of Nurses
- WMA World Medical Association
- World Physiotherapy
- WaterAid
- International College of Surgeons
- PATH
- Amref Health Africa
- IntraHealth International
- International Society for Telemedicine and eHealth

Item 12.1

Strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies

I am speaking on behalf of the International Council of Nurses, which is part of the World Health Professions Alliance. The WHPA is pleased to be strengthening its collaboration with WHO, formalized in November last year via a Memorandum of Understanding.

We appreciate the proposal to establish a Global Health Emergency Council and underline that to achieve the objective of a whole-of-society response, mechanisms to involve civil society organizations in the work of the council will need to be developed.

We strongly support the development of a cohesive multidisciplinary and professionalized health emergency workforce. Such an emergency workforce must be distributed in all regions of the world and rapidly deployable. It is crucial that principles contained in the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel be applied to this public health workforce.

We also wish to frame emergency response as a key component of health system strengthening and UHC. We underline the critical contribution of the health workforce as a whole to ensuring the continuity of essential health services, including the provision of palliative care during pandemics. We also emphasise the need for stronger health data governance, through a global framework, to improve patient management and safeguard rights.

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The extreme conditions generated by the pandemic highlight the need for decent, safe, and responsive working conditions to deliver better health outcomes. Safe and supportive working environments also ensure the retention of qualified health workers to maximize investments made in health education and training. Specifically in pandemics, this means measures to avoid exhaustion, mental health traumas and burn out caused by health systems gaps as well as actions to prevent workplace violence; it also means ensuring that health workers everywhere in the world can access personal protective equipment, immunization and other countermeasures given their greater risk of exposure.

Members States and WHO must involve health professionals in the way forward.