

Statement by Medicus Mundi International to the 140th session of the WHO Executive Board on agenda item (EB140/7; Health emergencies)

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to address the distinguished delegates at the Executive Board meeting of the WHO on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

We commend WHO's efforts to enhance and strengthen its capacity to respond to major emergencies around the world. However, it should be noted that WHO is not a Humanitarian aid organization and it should not step away from its primary role as the premier norm setting organisation on health, charged with directing and coordinating international health decision-making and policy.

While supporting reforms instituted to enhance WHO's capacity to respond during emergencies and development of the R&D blueprint, we have some comments and areas of concern. The use of public finance for R&D should address the needs of LMICs especially as regards affordable prices for all health products. Capacity building for countries at risk should ensure benefit sharing and access to R&D information. It is essential to ensure transparency on the nature of private sector involvement in the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation.

While recognising the possible need to use trial vaccines in emergency situations, it is also necessary to ensure ethical standards are adhered to during conduct of clinical trials.

The need to invest in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery is obvious, but the Health Emergencies Program faces a critical deficit in funding. We urge Member States to ensure full funding of the contingency fund and of the core and operational costs of the Health Emergencies Programs. Resource mobilization should not focus only on situations of crisis, but also for strengthening health systems, especially in LMICs. Investment in robust health systems with capacity for surveillance and disease control and prevention needs to be seen as the most sustainable method of preventing or mitigating the effects of health emergencies.

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