



Global Health Security: 15 Questions for WHO Director-General Candidates

A series of independent panels have met over the last year to review the response to the Ebola crisis, especially the work of the World Health Organization (WHO). These panels have reached a surprising degree of consensus and concluded that major reforms are both urgently needed and eminently feasible. Some of them are already being implemented by the current Director-General (DG) of WHO, others will fall into the responsibility of the new DG, who is to take office in June 2017. It will

be important for WHO Member States to gain an understanding of where various candidates for the position of DG stand in relation to the challenges WHO faces in health emergency and outbreak response. Therefore, a group of individuals who were involved in the work of the independent panels have put together a set of 15 questions related to the conclusions of the different reports, in order to support both candidates and Member States to reflect on this important area of WHO's work.

1. How important is WHO's role in health emergency and outbreak response? What would be required of the DG to make this role a success?
2. How is WHO's work in health emergency and outbreak response related to other priority areas of the Sustainable Development Goal 3, especially universal health coverage?
3. How should this function of WHO be financed: through increased assessed contributions, a special fund, a percentage of voluntary contributions, or other innovative financing mechanisms?
4. What can and should WHO do to strengthen both Member States capacity and accountability for adherence to the International Health Regulations (IHR)? Whom should WHO work with to move this agenda forward?
5. Is there any need to change the procedure for the declaration of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)? How can the DG best balance political pressure and global health concerns? How can transparency and accountability be strengthened?
6. How operational should WHO be in relation to health emergency and outbreak response? What more is needed to make WHO ready and capable to lead the world's response to PHEICs and potential PHEICs?
7. Is there any need to change the relationship between the three levels of WHO – headquarters, regional offices, and country offices – in relation to health emergency and outbreak response? What role can Member States play in facilitating this relationship?
8. How actively should WHO engage in coordinating the research required to be better prepared for outbreaks? What is WHO's role in ensuring innovation and equitable access to health technologies and diagnostics? Should WHO engage in research itself? Is a Pandemic Product Development Committee the way to go? How should the private sector engage?
9. Which of the proposed financing mechanisms should be taken forward and how should they be linked to WHO: financial support for IHR implementation, a vaccine fund, a Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, Rapid Credit Facilities?
10. The effective management of health crises exceeds the remit of health ministries and WHO – how can political leaders best be engaged? What would the key components of a UN-wide response be? What should WHO's relationship to the Emergency Response Coordinator (ERC) at the UN be?
11. Does the relationship between the DG of WHO and the UN Secretary General need to be more formalised, especially when a PHEIC is declared? Would the Security Council or the UN General Assembly have a role to play?
12. How should WHO engage with non-state actors – the private sector, foundations, and civil society – in relation to health emergency and outbreak response, especially during a PHEIC?
13. Which independent assessment and accountability mechanisms are required in relation to IHR implementation and WHO's health emergency and outbreak response?
14. Should the proposals by the UN Secretary General's High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises to establish a high-level Council on Global Public Health Crises and to organise a Health Summit in 2018 be taken forward?
15. Should there be a regular, independent global health security report, or another accountability mechanism, which assesses overall system performance in relation to health emergency and outbreak response?

This is an initiative in cooperation with

