



## World Obesity Federation

Statement delivered by Margot Neveux

### [Provisional agenda item 4.8: Strategy for building resilient health systems and post-COVID-19 pandemic recovery to sustain and protect public health gains](#)

We commend WHO and Member States in the region of the Americas for their strategy to building resilient health systems and post COVID-19 pandemic recovery report. We would however urge governments to recognise the central role of addressing NCDs as part of these recovery actions.

[90% of COVID-19-related deaths occurred in countries with high obesity rates](#). Obesity increases the [risks of hospitalisation, ICU admission and death from COVID-19](#), and the health consequences of obesity are often underplayed and conflated with other diseases such as diabetes. The [evidence](#) clearly demonstrates that obesity is a global health security issue and a disease requiring urgent action. COVID-19 has highlighted the urgent need to step up policy action and investment in obesity prevention, treatment and management.

By 2025, over [18% of children aged 5-19 will be living with obesity in the Americas](#). With the highest global prevalence of childhood obesity, [no country in the region is on track to meet WHO obesity targets](#). The rising costs of obesity and obesity-related diseases are also an imperative to act: it is estimated that the cost of high BMI to health services in the Americas is US\$ 670 billion per year.

We urge Member States to:

- Allocate health system resources to ensure appropriate care for PLWO who require COVID-19 treatment and safeguard access to routine services
- Ensure that responses to health emergencies integrate prevention policies for obesity, including those which enable equitable access to nutritionally adequate food, support physical activity and promote good mental health
- Ensure the health workforce is adequately trained to treat PLWO in a culturally-sensitive, non-stigmatising way
- Call for high-level political commitment and investment in UHC, ensuring efforts are cross-departmental and cross-sectoral. Governments should invest in obesity care from prevention to treatment and management and include obesity in COVID-19 recovery plans

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