



Statement on the report of the Member States Working Group on Strengthening WHO preparedness and response to health emergencies to the Special Session of the World Health Assembly

World Obesity commends WHO and its Member States for their coordinated action to date to help control the coronavirus and develop post-pandemic recovery plans. The report of the WGRP marks an important milestone in strengthening a global, coordinated response to future health emergencies. We support the development of an instrument to help support preparedness for future pandemics, and urge that it includes safeguard mechanisms to protect vulnerable populations.

Obesity, a complex multifactorial disease, was found to be highly correlated with COVID-19 associated mortality with death rates ten times higher in countries where over 50% of the population is overweight. Actions to address obesity and NCDs are essential to help prevent the disproportionate impact of pandemics on vulnerable populations. Member States around the world now have the opportunity to fast-track the implementation of nutrition and other public health policies to improve overall health and strengthen population resilience to future health threats.

We would highly support the development of a WHO-led instrument on pandemic preparedness and urge that the following elements are considered for inclusion:

- Governments should allocate health system resources to ensure appropriate care for people living with obesity and other NCDs in the case of future health emergencies, while ensuring access to routine services remains
- Ensure the health workforce is adequately trained to treat vulnerable populations in a culturally-sensitive, non-stigmatising way
- Ensure responses to future health emergencies integrate prevention policies for obesity and other NCDs, including improving health education, enabling equitable access to nutritionally adequate food, support physical activity and promote good mental health

There is an urgent need to step up policy action and increase investment in NCDs and obesity prevention, treatment and management in future preparedness plans. As part of global health security efforts, WHO and its Member States need to take urgent global action on obesity.

World Obesity Federation

Suite 410, 107-111 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2AB

T: +44 (0)20 7936 9987 E: enquiries@worldobesity.org

www.worldobesity.org

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