



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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