



Statement on the Amendment to the International Health Regulations

We congratulate the Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) for their efforts to approve the revisions to the International Health Regulations (IHRs) (2005) at the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA), despite the tensions and pressure that characterized the final phase of the negotiations.

The IHRs adopted in 2005 are legally binding on 196 States Parties. They help to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease.

The World Health Assembly 2024 has agreed to a set of amendments to the IHRs that will strengthen the international cooperation to support health security and equity, while recognising countries' sovereignty in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders. The International Health Regulations as amended can be found in document [A77/A/CONF.14](#).

One of the significant amendments is the introduction of measures to advance equitable access to relevant health products, critical to prevent, prepare for, and respond promptly and effectively to public health risks and public health emergencies of international concern, including a pandemic emergency. These amendments are made to article 13. The World Health Organization shall facilitate, and work to remove barriers to timely and equitable access by States Parties to relevant health products, after the determination of and during a public health emergency of international concern, including a pandemic emergency, based on public health risks and needs.

To this effect, the Director General (DG) is to take several actions, including to conduct, and periodically review and update, assessments of the public health needs, as well as of the availability and accessibility including affordability of relevant health products for the public health response; make use of WHO-coordinated mechanisms, or facilitate their establishment and coordinate allocation and distribution mechanisms and networks that facilitate timely and equitable access to relevant health products based on public health needs; support States Parties in scaling up and geographically diversifying the production of relevant health products; share the product dossier related to a specific relevant health

product for the purpose of facilitating regulatory evaluation and authorization by the State Party; and support States Parties to promote research and development and strengthen local production of quality, safe and effective relevant health products; and facilitate other measures relevant for the full implementation of this provision.

Moreover, States Parties should encourage relevant stakeholders operating in their respective jurisdictions to facilitate equitable access to relevant health products and make available relevant terms of their research and development agreements for relevant health products.

New amendments have also made the availability of, and accessibility to relevant health products central in the criteria for, and the issuance, modification or extension of temporary or standing recommendations by the WHO Director General, in Articles 15, 16, and 17.

The Article 44 of the Regulations concerning collaboration with each other and assistance has been amended to extend to preparedness for an event of pandemic emergency or public health emergencies of international concern, and to strengthen sustainable financing to support the implementation of the Regulations, and to facilitate access to health products.

The core capacities that States Parties are required to develop, strengthen and maintain, as elaborated in Annex 1 of the Regulations, are expanded from prevention and surveillance to include preparedness and response. New prevention core capacities include to prepare to provide and to facilitate access to health services necessary for responding to public health risks and events and to engage relevant stakeholders, including communities, in preparing for and responding to public health risks and events. Other requirements on core capacities include those in relation to access to health services and health products needed for the response and logistical assistance (e.g. equipment, medical and other relevant supplies and transport).

Another important amendment is the inclusion in the scope of the Regulations of events that may constitute a “pandemic emergency”, to complement the event that constitutes a “public health emergency of international concern”.

The amendments also establish that the recommendations issued by the WHO to States Parties shall take into account the need to facilitate international travel, particularly of health and care workers and persons in life-threatening or humanitarian situations, and maintain international supply chains, including for relevant health products and food supplies.

Rejections or reservations to the amendments to the Regulations can be notified to the DG.

The South Centre encourages its Member States and other countries to accept and implement the amendments at the national level while ensuring that the principles of equity and solidarity and finance are translated into effective measures.

The South Centre also supports the continued negotiations for a new pandemic treaty, that can complement the International Health Regulations, including meaningful provisions that address remaining gaps for effective global and equitable pandemic prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, and take lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic so that the stark inequity in timely access to health products and geographic concentration of production of health products are never again repeated.