



**A BRIEF ON THE WHO POSITION**

**Building health systems  
resilience for universal  
health coverage and  
health security  
during the COVID-19  
pandemic and  
beyond**



**World Health  
Organization**





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## **Key Messages For Heads of Government, Ministries of Finance and Leaders Outside the Health Sector**

- The health of populations is key to economic development – a fact recognized since the seminal World Bank report of 1993, Investing in health (1).
- The catastrophic human, social and economic toll of COVID-19 has demonstrated that protecting health is also critical for economic security; just as economic development and health development are inextricably linked, so too economic resilience depends on resilient health systems.
- Governments have invested heavily in the COVID-19 response, and now face the challenge of fiscal pressures, managing heavy debt burdens with pressure to increase taxation and reduce spending, while sustaining social protection.
- Governments must avoid falling into the cycle of “panic then forget”, frequently observed in past pandemics. Increased investment in emergency preparedness and response has all too often been followed by rapid disinvestment and neglect, which weaken health systems and undermine economic resilience.
- Many countries will require substantial health system reforms, addressing foundational gaps in public health capacities, including the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), to make them more efficient, effective and resilient, ensure economic resilience and socioeconomic development, and build trust.
- These reforms must integrate health emergency preparedness and response systems into universal health coverage efforts, based on primary health care and essential public health function approaches, with a reorientation of investment and resources.
- National health security and economic stability are also dependent on the protection of populations living in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. Governments must therefore ensure dignified, equitable health services for marginalized and vulnerable populations during and beyond emergencies.
- Such reforms, which build all-hazards health emergency preparedness and resilient health systems, generate a substantial return on investment in terms of healthier populations, economic resilience and equitable social development.



## Key Messages for Health Leaders, Partners and Communities

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