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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management  
**Crisis management and preparedness in health**

## **High-Level Conference on Global Health Security**

**22-23 March 2016, Lyon, France**

### **Flash report**

#### **Day 1: Opening speeches**

- The Conference was opened by *Mr Collomb, President of Lyon Metropolis; Pr Benoît Vallet, Director General for Health, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, France; Mr Martin Seychell, Deputy Director General, Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission and Dr Guénaël Rodier, Director, Division of Communicable Diseases, Health Security and Environment, WHO-HQ.*
- The opening was overshadowed by the attacks in Brussels on the morning preceding the meeting.
- Speakers emphasized the importance of the host town for the development of specific medical countermeasures, such as vaccines, in the last century, the need to further develop an appropriate framework capable of dealing with all challenges to global health security, recognized the wide spectrum of key stakeholders from all Regions of the World Health Organisation (WHO), and underlined the leading role of the WHO in maintaining and governing global partnership, and the need to jointly take further the coherent implementation of the International Health Regulation (IHR) with a view to timely completion.

#### **Setting the scene**

- *Pr Didier Houssin, Chair of the IHR (2005) Review Committee*, underlined the weakness of health systems in many countries the health systems and limited international solidarity and assistance, especially in case of health emergencies with just national significance or impact.
- The recent Ebola, MERS and Polio health events have shown shortcomings in terms of staff resources in affected countries but also in organisations providing assistance, and inappropriate trade and transport measures.
- The Committee's Recommendations following the Influenza epidemic in 2011 have so far only partially been implemented, however with some improvements in 2012 and 2013. They aim at implementing by reinforcing existing approaches rather than amending the IHR, developing a 10 year Global Strategic Plan and committing States Parties and development partners to provide financial support at all levels for its successful delivery. Raising awareness is crucial, and promoting self-assessment, complemented by external assessment of IHR core capacities, should become the standard to monitor and support implementation. WHO should establish a Standing Advisory Committee, which would have the

primary purpose of regularly reviewing the risk assessment and risk communication made by the WHO. An intermediate level of alert via a new category of risks that require a specific follow-up, called an International Public Health Risk Alert (IPHRA), is recommended.

- *Dr Bruce Aylward, Executive Director ad interim, Outbreaks and Health Emergencies - Special representative of the Director-General for the Ebola Response WHO*, shared three main reflections with the audience: the IHR failed when it was most needed in terms of international solidarity, in a very simple scenario; it appears from the self-reporting made by the countries that 85% of the countries declare that their health care capacities are reaching 85% of what can be expected while 15% is closer to the reality; there are still gaps but a minimum level of preparedness can already create a huge difference.
- Underlining the contribution made by the Global Health Security Agenda, the speaker acknowledged the progress made by the "Millennium" objectives in terms of development from his own perception of the management of the Ebola crisis while stressing the need to reinforce crisis centres and to offer help and support to the most vulnerable groups, The WHO is facing thorough but time consuming rebuilding. The field experience of Regional Directors is taken into account and will benefit from being given an active role in this process.
- The Lyon Conference interlinks local, regional and global health perspectives. Evaluation, inter-sectorial cooperation and sufficient capacities are key issues for examination at the Conference which should also serve to convey the key messages as regards the implementation of the IHR to the appropriate political level.

#### **Conclusions from the morning session: *Session 1 - Assessing countries' core capacities in the context of IHR (2005) and reporting back***

- Session 1 was moderated by *Pr Benoît Vallet* and made of two parts, panel and round table discussions involving the audience. Experts were invited to deliver key messages in the light of specific questions to be addressed during their contributions.
- The moderator summarized the discussions referring to still existing gaps that can, however, now be detected and addressed by new tools. Self-declaration as foreseen under the IHR launched in 2005 is not regarded sufficient anymore. As a further step and in line with the committee's recommendations, evaluations should be developed that are based on external elements to enhance better country preparedness, within the country as well as jointly with neighbouring countries and across regions. Scenario exercises, using modern tools, e.g. virtual simulations, will be the future pillars of preparedness and response.

#### **Conclusions from the afternoon session: *Session 2 - Developing cooperation and assistance initiatives between countries***

- Session 2 was chaired by *John Ryan, Chair of the European Union's Health Security Committee (HSC)*, again structured around key message presentations, panel and round table discussions and contributions from the audience.
- The moderator summarised the discussion noting challenges around accepting international interventions by local communities that can be, however, be mitigated by resorting to expertise in human and social sciences, for example the involvement of anthropologists. The perspectives of the Global Health Security

Initiative (GHSI) and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) offer incremental pathways for the implementation of the IHR, an approach which should be inclusive and transparent with laboratories playing a key role in early detection and epidemiological follow up.

**Day 2 - Conclusions from the morning session: *Sessions 1 and 2 - Strengthening health systems: ensuring human resources' skills and training, a prerequisite for improving global health security / Multisector action for effective IHR implementation***

- Session 2, similarly set up, was chaired by *Bruce Aylward* who, in his conclusions, underlined the need to identify priority topics such as IHR the involvement of key stakeholders in the implementation of the IHR and a thorough gap and needs analysis. Financing remains a key issue. Communities play a central role in early detection of unusual events. Available new tools and technologies should be used appropriately.

**Conclusions from the afternoon session: *Session 3 – International Health Security governance: A key issue to improve IHR (2005) implementation***

- Session 3 was introduced by *Mme Marisol Touraine, Minister for Social Affairs and Health, France*,<sup>1</sup> who stressed the importance of preparing for events by developing training programmes for health care professionals, dedicating sufficient funding for research, and taking on board lessons learnt in crisis management. Communication should be a major determinant, involving the population and requesting transparency and collective responsibility. Robust international governance is needed with the IHR as common legal framework with sound and independent evaluation and assessment of implementation in each country and with increase of the needed financing; the role of the WHO is central with regard to both points and the next Assembly will be crucial. The speaker called for international solidarity to make good hygiene standards accessible for everyone all people.
- In his keynote speech *Dr Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety*,<sup>2</sup> expressed his gratitude to the French organisers, in particular the city of Lyon, for the organisation of the Conference emphasised the added value of a solid global framework for healthy security which, however, does not come without considerable human, organisational and financial challenges. While underlining the need to thoroughly implement the IHR and acknowledging the institutional mandate of the IHR Review Committee, the Commissioner welcomed the growing consensus on assessing core capacities and peer reviewed country assessments that have now become generally endorsed as the method of choice to support and supplement national self-assessments. The Commissioner particularly endorsed the agreement of the global community to establish the Joint External Evaluation tool as the assessment tool of reference. Noting that the WHO cannot fulfil all the work ahead without the assistance of partners, and in particular the ongoing emergency reform process, he underlined the key role of the

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<sup>1</sup> accessible at: <http://www.marisoltouraine.fr/2016/03/conference-sur-le-reglement-sanitaire-international-discours-de-marisol-touraine/>

<sup>2</sup> accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/andriukaitis/announcements/international-health-security-governance-key-issue-improve-international-health-regulations-high\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/andriukaitis/announcements/international-health-security-governance-key-issue-improve-international-health-regulations-high_en)

"Advisory Group on the reform of the WHO work in outbreaks and emergencies with health and humanitarian consequences" and gave a brief outline the supportive role that EU framework on health security can provide also in the global context.

- The introductory speeches were followed by a panel discussion moderated by *Ms Marianne Doncker, Director of Public Health and Deputy Director General for Health, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, The Netherlands* on behalf of *Ms Angelique Berg, Director General for Health, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, The Netherlands*.<sup>3</sup>
- A discussion at *ministerial* level with representatives from *The Netherlands, Senegal, Japan, Germany, and Guinea* concluded this session.

### Closing speeches

- In her closing speech *Ms Margaret Chan, Director-General*,<sup>4</sup> WHO highlighted that there was no time to waste; following the Ebola epidemic, the Zika virus and other epidemics will have to be faced in the future. There is need for practical solutions and for reinforced implementation of measures.
- The speaker welcomed new initiatives, such as the "Alliance" led by Finland, and other initiatives contributing to global health security and congratulated Senegal, Mali and Nigeria to having eliminated Ebola. She also stressed the need to develop solidarity mechanisms and collective response systems supported by high-level political commitments.
- In his closing remarks *Mr François Hollande, Président de la République, France*, stressed the lack of personnel in medical and paramedical sectors that may preclude a high number of people from enough health care facilities in the future. The speaker reiterated that access to medication was crucial for everyone, and called for a coherent approach, inside countries but also at a global level. President Hollande also drew attention to the link between health and growth, as developments in the health sector are linked to the use of new technologies. In terms of health security, Mr Hollande recalled that the emergency was still there with more than 10.000 mortalities and also referred to the current Zika virus disease outbreak.
- The magnitude of the risk is directly related to increases in globalisation. There are more than 100000 flights per day. Risks are related to antimicrobial resistance and to the encroachment of natural habitats by man and domestic animals and other continuous interactions between man, animals and environment.
- President Hollande also emphasised the need for coordinated action in order to better understand, prevent, detect, respond and cure. He reassured that France will take its responsibilities and referred to the Lyon WHO Office as a dedicated place for the evaluation of the States' capacities to implement the IHR and to train leading personnel in health security<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> accessible at : <http://francais.eu2016.nl/documents/publicaties/2016/02/22/discours-de-madame-edith-schippers-lors-de-la-conference-sur-1%E2%80%99amelioration-des-produits-alimentaires>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.who.int/dg/speeches/2016/global-health-security/en/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.elysee.fr/declarations/article/discours-lors-de-la-conference-sur-la-securite-sanitaire-internationale-2/>