



## 2. Focus and strengthen the independence, authority and financing of the WHO

The WHO has an indispensable leadership role in the international system for prevention, preparedness and response to a global health emergency such as a pandemic. The work of WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic has been at a substantively different scale and level compared for example to the initial period of the response to Ebola in west Africa in 2014. WHO must be central to the global health system. For many years, it has been given new tasks without sufficient authority or resources to undertake them fully. In this pandemic, the efforts of its leadership and staff have been unstinting but structural problems have been exposed.

**WHO is and should be the lead health organization in the international system, but it cannot do everything.** It is imperative that the international preparedness and response system works together at the global, regional, and country levels as a well-defined and well-coordinated system in support of countries where different actors' comparative advantages are maximized.

WHO should in its support to national governments be the convener, but also in cases of emergencies it should strengthen its role as the coordinator without, in most circumstances, also taking on delivery functions (such as procurement and supply). WHO should focus on providing strategic direction and analysis, and formulating norms, standards and technical advice to ensure that countries have resilient health systems that are prepared with the required response capacities for health emergencies. In the case of emergencies WHO has an important operational role to play providing technical advice and support.

**The quality, timing and clarity of the technical advice** and direction WHO provides to the world are of the utmost importance. Programmes should be staffed with up-to-date, relevant, high quality experts, supported by the necessary financial, organizational, and management systems. Regional offices can play a key role in tailoring global advice more specifically to local contexts. A core technical function of WHO is the translation of models of successful national response into strategies that can be applied elsewhere.

**The way that WHO is financed today** has serious impacts on the quality of the organization's performance. Its precarious financing is a major risk to the integrity and independence of its work. Incremental attempts in recent decades to improve the present funding model have not been successful.

While the WHO Director-General nominally has many of necessary formal and legal authorities to make decisions, and guide and communicate with the world concerning pandemics and health at large, in practice there are challenges to the use of that authority. Global health is inevitably a politically charged domain and it is vital that WHO as an institution