



# Update from the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly – 28 May 2021

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- New resolutions on the health and care workforce and strategic directions for nursing and midwifery
- Decisions on patient safety; health, environment and climate change; chemicals management; coordination of work on noncommunicable diseases
- Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Wellbeing for All
- Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment

## Protect, safeguard and invest in the health and care workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical role of all health and care workers at the forefront of the pandemic, who have faced multiple risks related to their health, well-being and safety.

The resolution on *Protecting, safeguarding and investing in the health and care workforce* calls for action to guarantee that investments in our workforce ensure they are: skilled, trained, equipped, supported and enabled. It stresses the need for decent pay, recognition, a safe working environment, and protection of their rights.

The resolution highlights the need to:

- enable all health and care workers to access COVID-19 vaccines, Personal Protective Equipment, decent work conditions, and equitable labour protection that is free from all forms of discrimination
- accelerate multisectoral collaboration and sustained investments in health workforce education, skills and jobs
- drive the implementation, measurement and reporting on the [WHO Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health](#) and the [WHO Global Code of Practice on International Recruitment of Health Personnel](#)
- prepare a global health and care worker compact.

It mandates the Director-General to update and strengthen implementation of WHO's action plan on health employment and inclusive economic growth, working with Member States and relevant partners.

*The [Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery 2021–2025](#) and its accompanying resolution provide policy recommendations on education, jobs, leadership, and service delivery that will help countries ensure that their nurses and midwives have maximum impact on population health outcomes. These policies are derived from the evidence published in the [State of the World's Nursing Report \(2020\)](#) and the [State of the World's Midwifery Report \(2021\)](#).*

2021 is the International Year of the Health and Care Workers. At the heart of this Year is the recognition that in order to manage the pandemic, maintain health services, improve health workforce readiness, education and learning, and roll out COVID-19 vaccination equitably, the world must protect and invest in health and care workers.

## Related links

- [Health workforce](#)
- [Year of Health and Care Workers](#)

## Decision on Patient Safety aims to eliminate avoidable harm in health care globally

Delegates agreed on concrete action to eliminate avoidable harm in health care by adopting the first ever "Global Patient Safety Action Plan 2021–2030". Every year, millions of patients suffer injuries or die due to unsafe health care globally, with 134 million adverse events occurring annually in low- and middle-income countries alone, contributing to 2.6 million deaths. Even in high-income countries, about 1 in 10 patients is harmed while receiving hospital care. It is estimated that almost half of these events can be prevented.

In 2019 a WHA resolution on global action on patient safety recognized patient safety as a key global health priority, requesting WHO to consult with countries and stakeholders to formulate a global patient safety action plan.

Today's decision provides strategic and practical direction to countries to formulate policies and implement interventions at all levels and settings aimed at improving patient safety. The action plan outlines priority actions to be taken by governments, civil society, international organizations, intergovernmental organizations, WHO and, most importantly, by health care facilities across the world. WHO will work in cooperation with Member States in the development of their respective implementation plans, according to their national context.

## Related links

- [Factsheet: Patient Safety](#)
- [Photo story: 10 facts on patient safe](#)

# Global strategy on health, environment and climate change

Important steps have already been taken to implement the 2019 WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change: the transformation needed to improve lives and well-being sustainably through healthy environments.

These include the manifesto for a green and healthy recovery from COVID-19, a plan of action on biodiversity and health; advocacy for water, sanitation and hygiene in health-care facilities; launch of the Hand Hygiene for All Global Initiative; health messages for the upcoming COP-26 (UN Climate Change Conference of Parties); the global campaign to prevent lead poisoning; various regional action plans and fora to support country action on health and environment. WHO has provided support to a number of countries on health and environment related projects.

Delegates at the WHA have now decided to report on progress on the strategy in 2, 4, and 8 years' time.

## Related link

- [WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change](#): the transformation needed to improve lives and wellbeing sustainably through healthy environments

# International Chemicals Management and the role of the health sector

Delegates also decided to report again in 2 years' time on progress towards the implementation of the WHO Chemicals Road Map, highlighting the critical role of health in sound chemicals management, and need to mainstream chemicals management into all health programmes. They also requested the Secretariat to update the road map to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

## Related links:

- [10 chemicals of public health concern](#)
- [WHO chemical safety webpage](#)

# Extension of the Global Coordination Mechanism for Noncommunicable Diseases

The Global Coordination Mechanism (GCM) for Noncommunicable Diseases will be extended until 2030. The GCM was established in 2014.

A number of measures have been recommended to improve its effectiveness. These include development of a workplan for the delivery of the 5 functions for which the GCM has responsibility. The plan will include a clear vision, a robust results framework, performance and outcome indicators and clarity on how the mechanism will carry out its functions in a way that is integrated with WHO's ongoing work on NCDs. The plan will be submitted to the World Health Assembly in 2022, after consideration by the Executive Board.

Practical tools for sharing knowledge and disseminating information about innovative activities from a variety of stakeholders working at country level will be developed. So will a global stock-take of action from various stakeholders at country level, together with guidance to Member States on engagement with non-State actors, including on the prevention and management of potential risks. Advice will be provided to civil society on how to develop national multi-stakeholder responses to NCDs and hold governments to account; and the capacity of people living with NCDs to participate in the co-creation of whole-of-society responses to NCDs will be strengthened.

## Related links

- [Final evaluation of the global coordination mechanism on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. Executive summary – April 2021](#)
- [Options paper on the global coordination mechanism on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases](#)
- [Mid-point evaluation of the implementation of the WHO global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020](#)
- [Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of NCDs](#)
- [More on noncommunicable diseases](#)

## Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Wellbeing for All – SDG GAP

Delegates highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed a decade of progress on SDG targets and underscored the need to redouble efforts by accelerating implementation of SDG3 GAP, WHO's 13<sup>th</sup> general programme of work, and the Primary Health Care special programme.

There was wide support for the SDG3 GAP and WHO's convening role. Delegates noted the GAP's key role in strengthening primary health care and advancing progress towards the targets set out in the Global Strategy on Women's, Children's and Adolescents' health. They also emphasized its focus on country-level impact and its critical role in supporting equitable and resilient recovery.

### Related links:

- [2021 Progress report on the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All](#)
- [Information on The Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All](#)

## Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse

At the [Strategic briefing Preventing sexual exploitation and abuse: from policy to practice in health emergencies](#), the Secretariat outlined what WHO is doing across all levels of the organization to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and harassment.

WHO is committed to taking a comprehensive, holistic and survivor-centred approach to PSEA and sexual harassment, and is taking actions in the areas of policy, capacity-development and operations. PSEA focal points in Ukraine, Guinea and Bangladesh informed Member States of their work in crisis settings for communities and staff, including regular and mandatory PSEA training for WHO staff, implementation of hotlines to safely report complaints, designation of trusted community focal points, and continued liaison with partner agencies in prevention efforts.

The Director-General addressed the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of Committee B on Agenda item 30.2 – the report of the Internal Auditor on preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (A74/36). The Director-General assured Delegates that they will receive regular monthly updates on the investigations of the Independent Commission on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse during the response to the 10<sup>th</sup> Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Secretariat will also provide quarterly briefings to Member States, as required by the Executive Board, and have dedicated agenda items on this topic for future WHO governance meetings. In addition, WHO will:

- establish a WHO task team, led by a senior female staff member, to accelerate the implementation of organization-wide WHO policies and procedures, adopting a holistic approach to prevention and management of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The task team will also oversee the implementation of the Independent Commission recommendations;
- establish an informal consultative group of external experts who can advise on ‘best in class’ approaches, recognizing that Member States and other entities have valuable experience and expertise that WHO can draw upon.

Director-General's introductory remarks on agenda item 30.2, report A74/36 on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and the report of PBAC A74/51

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