



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN Geneva

WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD 148th Session (virtual) (18-26 January, 2021)

Agenda item 14.1: COVID-19 Response (Public health emergencies: preparedness and response)

Mr. Chairman and Honourable Delegates,

COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the world in an unprecedented manner, blurring the distinction between developed and under-developed health systems. However, being a developing country did not impair Pakistan's ability to mount a robust and timely response to the biggest health emergency of our times. Pakistan is fortunate that the COVID-19 first wave was responded effectively to a large extent and economic and social activities mostly revived. However, the second wave is prevailing with no time for either apathy or complacency. This is a time for more vigorous and positive actions.

Pakistan reported its first cases on the 26th of February 2020 and so far, (12th January 2021) the country's tally has reached up to 521,211 total cases and 10,997 deaths. Government of Pakistan adopted a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach at the strategic level and aligned the strategic decisions across the implementation processes in the country. The COVID-19 Pakistan Preparedness and Response Plan (PPRP) was devised in line with the National Action Plan for Corona Virus Disease in Pakistan and WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP).

Mr. Chairman,

Government of Pakistan established National Coordination Committee (NCC) as a key body for policy and decision making under the leadership of its Prime Minister. To assist the NCC and implement its decisions a National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) was also established. These fora and Ministry of NHSRC have played a pivotal role in establishing a "whole of Government approach" across the country through a coordinated mechanism and are still fully functional for response to COVID-19 outbreaks in the country.

Our strategies to combat COVID-19 pandemic revolve around the core pillars with focus on effective on ground implementation:

- **Slowing down the spread of disease:** a) Limiting Public Space to reduce transmission; b) Smart Lockdowns implemented in localities (with more than 100 cases) to reduce the transmission and also to provide relief to labour and lower middle income group for their livelihood; c) Testing, Tracing & Quarantine using Geo Fencing technology for contact tracing and isolation; d) SOPs & Guidelines were developed to bring uniformity in protocols across the country on preventive, promotive and curative aspects of the epidemic thus ensuring uniformity in mitigation response; e) Enhanced Testing Capacity has been ensured by Federal Government efforts improving capacity from single laboratory at NIH to 138 labs across the country.
- **Ramping-up the Healthcare Facilities:** Federal Government supported in a) Additional 2800 beds equipped across the country to provide adequate treatment facilities with provision of equipment and supplies; b) Ensuring Medical Oxygen Supply in light of actual requirements in facilities; c) Established Resource Management System to capture and quantify essential equipment/supplies data.
- Bringing in “National Health Emergency Response Act, 2020” to provide legislative support to our coordinated response efforts.
- **Media Campaign & Awareness:** *We Care* launched to reduce stress and anxiety of the front-line health workers and to improve their morale.
- **Capacity Building of Health Care Workers:** To improve management of patients in ICUs and HDUs, training of Rapid Response Teams and courses on epidemiological modelling were started.
- **Financial Resources channeled:** Especially the Prime Minister Fiscal Stimulus Package of PKR 50 Billion proved critical for early COVID response. In addition, the Federal and Provincial Governments continue to provide additional financial support for the smooth ongoing country’s response and preparedness measure.
- **Data collection, analysis, reporting and dissemination:** Effective use of robust Polio EOCs network; GoP-COVID-19 information platform/dashboard (covid.gov.pk), Infectious Disease Information Management System (IDIMS), COVID-19 Mobile app, Corona Relief Tiger

Force Registration, Corona Complaint Management system, Pak Neghayban and Pakistan Pass track app.

- **Telemedicine:** Ministry of NHSRC and Digital Pakistan has launched a COVID-19 Telehealth portal, to connect volunteer doctors to Pakistani citizens at primary & secondary level facilities to reduce unnecessary hospital attendance. Yaran-e-Watan – Pakistani Diaspora Initiative has augmented and supplemented the Government’s response to this global pandemic.
- **Vaccine strategy:** Pakistan has developed a comprehensive COVID Vaccine Strategy. Expert Technical Committee of Government of Pakistan carried out negotiation with COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers for early procurement of the vaccine that would be given in phasic manner to the Frontline Healthcare worker and elderly population on priority basis. As of today, 2 vaccines have already been accorded EUA by DRAP.

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to thank the Independent Panel for its thorough review of the evidence thus far, identifying lessons and opportunities to ensure our international systems are better prepared for future pandemics. We look forward to the report, the Independent Panel will produce for the World Health Assembly. As this complex pandemic continues to evolve, to ensure our collective comprehensive understanding, the Government of Pakistan would like to express our consideration that the Independent Panel should possibly continue its function beyond the WHA as well.

Let me conclude by extending appreciation to the World Health Organization (WHO) in supporting Pakistan’s efforts to promote the achievement of highest sustainable level of health for all and upbuild IHR core capacities to deal with the health threats and emergencies.

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen.
