

Current major event

Thirteenth meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic

The International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) Emergency Committee and the WHO Director-General determined on 13 October 2022 that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remains a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

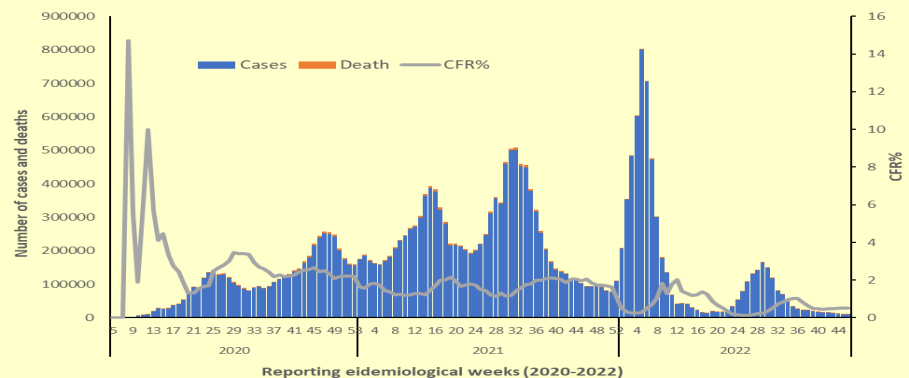
Editorial note

The thirteenth meeting of the Emergency Committee was convened by the WHO Director-General under the IHR (2005) regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on Thursday, 13 October 2022. The WHO Director-General accepted the advice offered by the Committee, determining that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). As per normal IHR (2005) procedures, the Emergency Committee is reconvened by the Director-General within 3 months of the last meeting to review whether the event still constitutes a PHEIC and to provide advice with new or updated temporary recommendations. The previous meeting of this Committee was held on 8 July 2022.

Although the Committee acknowledged progress in controlling the outbreak in many countries and the high levels of population immunity, concerns remained, such as, the continuing high numbers of cases and deaths, unpredictable evolution of the virus, pockets of under-vaccination among those most at-risk, and inequitable access to treatments.

The Director-General first highlighted the community perception that the emergency may be over, the number of weekly deaths that is still high compared to other respiratory viruses, the added burden of COVID-19 related complications and Post-COVID-19 Condition, and the evolution of the pandemic during the upcoming winter season in the Northern hemisphere. Second, the Director-General mentioned the unpredictability of genetic and antigenic characteristics of future variants and potentially increased properties of immune escape. Finally, the inequities in access to COVID-19 vaccines and therapeutics were highlighted, mentioning that the highest priority groups do not currently have access to safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics. As a result, the continued

Weekly distribution of COVID-19 cases in EMR countries epidemiological week 5 2020 – week 46 2022



coordination of the international response is essential.

The WHO Director-General considered the advice provided by the Committee regarding the proposed recommendations and issued a set of nine Temporary Recommendations to all States Parties: (1) strengthen SARS-CoV-2 surveillance in humans to maintain or enhance capacity to detect and assess emerging variants and significant changes to COVID-19 epidemiology and to focus on better understanding the burden of COVID-19 in all regions, and its impact on health and public health services; (2) strengthen or implement surveillance to monitor presence and evolution of SARS-CoV-2 in animal populations; (3) achieve national COVID-19 vaccination targets; (4) support timely uptake of accurate therapeutics and timely SARS-CoV-2 testing, linked to WHO recommended therapeutics; (5) maintain the strong national response to the COVID-19 pandemic; (6) address the infodemic, risk communications and community engagement challenges, and the divergent perceptions in risk between scientific communities, political leaders and the general public; (7) continue to adapt the use of appropriate effective, individual-level protective measures to reduce transmission; (8) maintain essential health, social, and education services; and (9) continue to adjust any remaining international travel-related measures.

Since the PHEIC was first declared on 30 January 2020, WHO has provided global leadership, shared information with Member States and the public, worked with countries to prepare and respond, trained and ensured supplies for health care workers, accelerated research and development, and coordinated a global approach towards development and access to COVID-19 tools.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

COVID-19 in 22 EMR countries

Current public health events of concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): 2019-2022

Afghanistan	[205 067 (7831), 3.8%]
Bahrain	[694 740 (1533), 0.2%]
Djibouti	[15 690 (189), 1.2%]
Egypt	[515 431 (24 798), 4.8%]
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	[7 559 258 (144 625) 1.9%]
Iraq	[2 462 969 (25 362), 1%]
Jordan	[1 746 997 (14 122), 0.8%]
Kuwait	[662 631 (2570), 0.4%]
Lebanon	[1 220 043 (10 727), 0.9%]
Libya	[507 078 (6437), 1.3%]
Morocco	[1 267 266 (16 283), 1.3%]
occupied Palestinian territory (oPt)	[703 036 (5708), 0.8%]
Oman	[399 119 (4628), 1.2%]
Pakistan	[1 574 896 (30 630), 1.9%]
Qatar	[475 626 (684), 0.1%]
Saudi Arabia	[825 029 (9446) 1.1%]
Somalia	[27 286 (1361), 5%]
Sudan	[63 625 (4986), 7.8%]
Syrian Arab Republic	[57 387 (3163), 5.5%]
Tunisia	[1 146 991 (29 268), 2.6%]
United Arab Emirates	[1 042 340 (2348), 0.2%]
Yemen	[11 945 (2159), 18.1%]