The Western Pacific Region is a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases and health emergencies. Over the past decade, considerable investments have been made in outbreak and emergency preparedness. Member States have advanced implementation of the International Health Regulations, or IHR (2005), and helped make the Western Pacific Region safer for its nearly 1.9 billion people.

Much has changed, but the threat remains. A lot of work still needs to be done to prepare for outbreaks and pandemics.

At the same time, countries face other challenges, such as natural disasters, instability and turmoil. The United Nations Secretary-General recently issued a worldwide "red alert", citing human rights violations, climate change, risk of nuclear war, rising nationalism and xenophobia.

Ensuring the safety of our food has also become more complex in today’s increasingly interconnected world.

WHO is committed to saving lives and protecting health in times of crisis – whether caused by outbreaks, conflicts or natural disasters. The Organization’s 13th General Programme of Work lays out an ambitious goal to ensure that 1 billion more people are better protected from health emergencies by 2023.

The WHO Health Emergencies Programme was established in 2016 to facilitate a faster, more predictable and effective response to outbreaks and emergencies. In the Western Pacific Region, the Programme is now embedded in the Division of Health Security and Emergencies, alongside the Organization's work on food safety, which includes support for Member States to manage food safety risks and respond to food safety incidents and emergencies.

We work with Member States and partners to ensure that the 37 countries and areas in the Region are better protected from disease outbreaks and emergencies. Together, we strive for IMPACT:

- Improve country preparedness
- Monitor signs of outbreaks and emergencies and assess risks
- Prevent and control the spread of priority infectious diseases
- Advance WHO readiness
- Coordinate and support emergency response
- Team up with partners

In 1918, an influenza pandemic killed an estimated 20-50 million people. Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) led to US$ 40 billion in economic losses in 2003. The 2009 influenza A(H1N1) pandemic spread to more than 210 countries and areas in just one year.

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