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Course title: Principles of international organizations

Question: Identify the roles of specific international organisation in responding to COVID-19 pandemic globally.

The COVID-19 has caused a lot of reactions to emerge from different international organizations. Most for funding of individuals at home while others for countries in need. These are some of the reactions of the World Health Organization, United Nations, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Trade Organization.

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION(WHO)

The World Health Organization (WHO) is working closely with global experts, governments and partners to rapidly expand scientific knowledge on this new virus, to track the spread and virulence of the virus, and to provide advice to countries and individuals on measures to protect health and prevent the spread of this outbreak.

WHO has issued a COVID-19 Strategic Prearedness and Response Plan, which identifies the major actions countries need to take, and the resources needed to carry them out.

The plan, which is updated as fresh information and data improve WHO’s understanding of the characteristics of the virus and how to respond, acts as a guide for developing country-specific plans.

The health agency’s six regional offices, and 150 country offices, work closely with governments around the world to prepare their health systems for the ravages of COVID-19, and to respond effectively when cases arrive and begin to mount.

With partners, WHO set up the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, to ensure patients get the care they need, and frontline workers get essential supplies and information; and to accelerate research and development of a vaccine and treatments for all who need them.

With donations from governments, the private sector and individuals, more than $800 million has been pledged or received for the response so far.

The internet is awash with information about the pandemic, some of it useful, some of it false or misleading. In the midst of this “infodemic”, WHO is producing accurate, useful guidance that can help save lives.

This includes around 50 pieces of technical advice for the public, health workers and countries, with evidence-based guidance on every element of the response, and exploding dangerous myths.

The health agency benefits from the expertise of a global network of health professionals and scientists, including epidemiologists, clinicians and virologists, to ensure that the response is as comprehensive, authoritative and representative as possible.

To ensure information is correct and helpful, WHO set up a team to give everyone access to timely, accurate and easy-to-understand advice, from trusted sources. In addition, daily situation reports and press briefings, as well as briefings with governments, are keeping the world informed about the latest data, information and evidence.

Many social media and tech companies are working closely with WHO to aid the flow of reliable information, including Instagram, Linkedin and TikTok; and chatbots on the Whatsapp and Viber platforms have garnered millions of followers, sending out timely updates and reports.

Personal protective equipment is essential to ensure health professionals are able to save lives, including their own. So far, WHO has shipped more than two million items of personal protective equipment to 133 countries, and is preparing to ship another two million items in the coming weeks. More than a million diagnostic tests have been dispatched to 126 countries, in all regions, and more are being sourced.

However, far more is needed, and WHO is working with the International Chamber of Commerce, the World Economic Forum, and others in the private sector, to ramp up the production and distribution of essential medical supplies.

On 8 April, WHO launched a “UN COVID-19 Supply Chain Task Force”, which aims to dramatically increase the supply of essential protective equipment where it is needed.

WHO is aiming to train millions of health workers, via its OpenWHO platform. Thanks to this online tool, life-saving knowledge is being transferred to frontline personnel by the Organization, and its key partners.

Users take part in a worldwide, social learning network, based on interactive, online courses and materials covering a variety of subjects. OpenWHO also serves as a forum for the rapid sharing of public health expertise, and in-depth discussion and feedback on key issues. So far, more than 1.2 million people have enrolled in 43 languages.

Countries are also being supported by experts, deployed around the world by the WHO’s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). During outbreaks, the network ensures that the right technical expertise and skills are on the ground where and when they are needed most.

Emergency Medical Teams are also an important part of the global health workforce. These teams are highly trained, and self-sufficient, and are sent to places identified as disaster or emergency zones.

Laboratories in many countries are already conducting tests that, it is hoped, will eventually lead to a vaccine. In an attempt to corral these efforts, WHO brought together 400 of the world’s leading researchers in February, to identify research priorities.

The agency launched a “Solidarity Trial”, an international clinical trial, involving 90 countries, to help find effective treatment. The aim is to rapidly discover whether any existing drugs can slow the progression of the disease, or improve survival.

To better understand the virus, WHO has developed research protocols that are being used in more than 40 countries, in a coordinated way, and some 130 scientists, funders and manufacturers from around the world have signed a statement committing to work with WHO to speed the development of a vaccine against COVID-19.

THE WORLD BANK

Many of the world’s low- and middle-income countries are still in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the impact is already being felt. Health systems are strained in Ethiopia and Yemen; more medical staff are needed in countries such as Haiti and Mongolia. Millions of children can’t go to school in Pakistan and need solutions for remote learning. The risks posed by the coronavirus are especially high for millions of people who live in poverty or have only recently emerged from it.

The World Bank Group is acting quickly to step up support as countries respond to the COVID-19 crisis and face a wide range of consequences, including the risk of global recession.

With approval today from its Board, the Bank Group is immediately launching emergency support through operations around the world. And this urgent help to governments and companies is just the start of a broader effort. Given the unprecedented challenges that COVID-19 poses, the Bank Group expects to deploy up to $160 billion over the next 15 months to help countries protect the poor and vulnerable, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery.

In stressing the vital role that the World Bank Group institutions can play, President David Malpass noted that “The poorest and most vulnerable countries will likely be hit the hardest.” He emphasized that “The World Bank Group is taking broad, fast action to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and we already have health response operations moving forward in over 65 countries.”

"The World Bank Group is taking broad, fast action to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and we already have health response operations moving forward in over 65 countries."

David R. Malpass. © Franz Mahr/World Bank

President of the World Bank Group

Special provisions for fast-track financing are allowing an initial group of World Bank projects totaling $1.9 billion to get underway quickly in 25 countries. Bank teams are also working with clients to rapidly redeploy a further $1.7 billion from existing projects to urgent pandemic response and recovery. This includes restructuring and use of projects’ emergency components as well as contingent financing instruments designed for catastrophes.

The focus of these first efforts is to help health systems tackle the immediate challenges of COVID-19. For example, in countries ranging from Afghanistan and Haiti to India, Mongolia, and Tajikistan, the financing will help bring more medical staff onboard and ensure that they are well trained and equipped to deliver emergency care. In countries like Ecuador and the Kyrgyz Republic, it will help ensure that public outreach that gets strong prevention and protection messages to citizens in the short and medium term. And in Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Yemen, among other countries, the increase in resources to fight the pandemic will also support long-term efforts that strengthen and build the capacity of the national health system.

The Democratic Republic of Congo illustrates the range of help that the Bank’s projects will provide, from early detection of the virus to contact tracing, a cordon sanitaire to limit the spread from the capital, and large-scale public information campaigns. The financing will also equip and rehabilitate key primary care facilities so that they can operate at the standards needed to combat the pandemic.

In Pakistan, the Bank’s support will be crucial to making remote learning available for 50 million children whose schools have had to close. The emergency financing here will also enable basic food to reach 40,000 people whose movement will be restricted for up to 6 months, and it will train health workers to watch for and help prevent gender-based violence in households under quarantine.

In addition to the World Bank projects, the emergency financing includes $8 billion from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), where work is underway to help the private sector cope with the pandemic. Experience from previous shocks shows that keeping companies solvent is key to saving jobs and limiting the economic damage. In addition to new investments, IFC is extending trade finance and working capital lines to clients. Many Bank Group efforts will also continue to focus on smaller businesses, so that they can resume their key contribution to growth and jobs in many client countries.

Supplementing the direct assistance to governments and private firms, the Bank Group is working to address disruptions in global supply chains, so that countries have access to critically needed medical supplies. The World Bank is reaching out to suppliers on behalf of governments to help ensure that suppliers can deliver throughout the global emergency.

The Bank Group’s broader economic program is also quickly taking shape and could provide up to $160 billion in support to client countries over the next 15 months. One of its first components will be $6 billion for expedited loan guarantees from the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA). This will enable the purchase of urgent medical equipment and provide working capital for companies, including smaller businesses, while also supporting governments’ short-term funding needs.

Through financing and a wide range of technical support, the Bank Group will work to help countries shorten their time to recovery and lay the foundations for future growth. And across all the efforts to combat COVID-19, the focus will be on solutions that can help countries ensure protection and restore opportunities for their poorest and most vulnerable people.

THE EBRD

The EBRD is working urgently across the regions where it invests to provide immediate support to companies that are suffering from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

EBRD shareholders have approved a framework that – as a first step – will provide up to €1 billion to clients suffering temporary difficulties. (The proposals were approved on 13 March.)

The resilience framework will last as long as it is needed. How long it operates will depend on demand from clients.

This important initial stage demonstrates solidarity with our most important stakeholders: our existing clients. (Existing clients are understood as partners who have an outstanding EBRD Loan or equity investment - or who have repaid or exited since 1 January 2019.)

In this dynamic and uncertain environment and in a time of crisis when speed is of the essence, the EBRD is ready to do whatever it takes.

Without compromising sound banking, accountability or compliance standards, our management is already developing a streamlined approach to project approval.

Expansion of trade finance and where required short term (up to 2 years) finance through financial institutions, notably in support of SMEs;

Short-term (up to 2 years) working capital facilities for corporates and energy developers;

For sub sovereign municipal, energy and infrastructure clients, balance sheet restructuring and short-term liquidity support

The EBRD will take “an enabling view” to restructuring of existing loans adjusted repayment schedules, collateral, interest rates and fee structures

We will exploit our ability to disburse in local currency, including the possible conversion of existing facilities into local currency.

Our SME Finance and Development teams are working to support SMEs by using available digital tools to provide critical advice - and to women-led SMEs in particular - on cash, liquidity and crisis management.

The EBRD is well-placed to support the companies that need its help:

1. Our capital position is strong: stronger than before the global financial crisis of 2008/9. We can continue making sound investments – even in the case of a severe scenario with a prolonged pandemic, contraction and U‐shaped recovery.

2. The EBRD has strong relationships with the governments in the countries where it operates and it will work with the relevant authorities on how the EBRD can best respond to the crisis.

3. It has very close relationships with its clients and will help formulate the response to the crisis

4. The EBRD’s Resident Office network gives the Bank unrivalled capacity for business continuity, as our local staff originate and monitor our crisis response on the ground.

At all times we are closely following the statements of our major shareholders and coordinating with other multilateral development banks in order to exchange ideas and learn from each other's experiences.

THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

In a speech delivered to a virtual meeting of the Washington International Trade Association on 26 March, Deputy Director-General Alan Wolff said the COVID-19 pandemic calls for an “unprecedented level” of international cooperation to tackle the crisis. He outlined six priorities the WTO has for meeting the challenge, including providing a cooperative framework for members to consider their responses, making it clear members have wide freedom to take necessary positive actions to address the crisis, and helping craft coordinated responses to keep trade flows open. The text of DDG Wolff’s speech is below.

The WTO has six current priorities for meeting the current crisis:

The first priority of the WTO as with any government, corporation or organization, is to keep our Members, our staff and the public, all of whom are our stakeholders, safe and to assure continuity of service.

Without this first step, maintaining the ability to function, nothing else that we might think about would matter.

16 days ago, on Tuesday, March 10, the WTO suspended all meetings at its building and twelve days ago, on Saturday, March 14, extended the suspension until the end of April.

12 days ago, on Saturday, March 14, the WTO informed all staff whose work did not require them to work on-site to work from home.

The response has been very good. Virtual staff meetings are being held. The IT and administrative staff that have to be onsite have risen to the current challenge. A Health Task Force keeps us informed. And importantly, the WTO Secretariat’s daily work has continued unabated, adapting to remote access to and for colleagues, resources and Members.

At the same time, the chiefs of mission of the 164 Members of the WTO, correctly gave their first priority to safeguarding their own staffs and making sure that their offices could still function.

The second WTO priority is to provide an international cooperative framework in which Members can consider their individual responses to this crisis.

The G7 leaders pledged to do all that is necessary to fight the spread of the virus and to deal with its economic consequences, and WTO is pledged to fully support this effort.

The primary ways in which the WTO can implement this pledge are the following:

The WTO agreements act as a framework for trade and trade-related policy design.

The WTO agreements are very flexible in these circumstances, but still have built in best practices. Emergency measures should generally be targeted, temporary, and transparent.

The WTO also serves as a venue for discussions, cooperation, coordination and negotiation, even if the discussions will for the time being largely not be face-to-face.

Today, the WTO Director General is participating in the G20 leaders' virtual meeting. In the coming days, he will be updating the G20 on the trade aspects of the crisis.

The first priorities of WTO Members have sensibly been to protect the health of their peoples and then of their economies through macroeconomic measures such as fiscal stimulus packages and tax relief, to go along with measures that Central bankers have taken with respect to the money supply and interest rates. Dealing with trade measures is necessarily the next step for WTO Members to consider.

The third priority is to be in a position to inform Members of the effects on world trade of the spread of the virus.

The WTO set up a cross-divisional task force to gather all possible information on measure taken by countries that have an effect on world trade related to the spread of the virus. This includes measures that facilitate as well as those which restrict international trade.

The WTO Director General has urged WTO Members to provide notifications of trade measures they have taken in response to the Covid-19 outbreak, and that is happening.

A Covid-19 web page has been established to make publicly available relevant information including trade measures taken by WTO Members.

The WTO will in a few weeks issue its Trade Forecast for 2020 which will assess the impact of the sudden and widespread supply and demand shocks to the world economy.

The central factor to focus on is the figure for the recent increase in trade costs – the costs of moving goods from their point of origin to a market beyond an international border.

The increase in trade costs due to the coronavirus is substantial. It is a multiple of total current average tariffs worldwide.

Increased costs of trade:

It is not just overtly trade restrictive measures and traditional tariffs that affect costs of trade; there is a change for the worse of the conditions for trade since Covid -19 began to spread. Among these --

Air cargo on passenger planes has been cut back as the number of commercial flights has plummeted;

The people who conduct trade and whose expenditures constitute trade cannot travel internationally; and

Uncoordinated and differing national standards for urgently needed emergency medical equipment, supplies and pharmaceuticals can have a serious adverse impact.

The fourth priority is to make it clearly understood that there is wide freedom to take necessary positive actions to meet the crisis.

Members are completely free to apply lower tariff rates or have no tariffs on any and all products whatsoever.

Tariff rates in WTO schedules are maximum permissible levels. In the case of WTO Members who have committed to high rates, the applied rates are very often lower. In addition, some 20% of world trade flows outside of WTO notified rates, much of which is subject to duty free treatment under bilateral and regional trade agreements.

The tariff rates on individual products are all rendered anachronistic by the current crisis. The tariff rates that are contractually bound were for 122 of our 164 Members established in 1993. For the 36 other Members who came into the WTO since then, they are set at the time of entry. For example, for China, the world’s largest trading country, the rates were set in 2001.

There are two examples of attempted coordinated action at the WTO to meet specific economic objectives through tariff elimination.

One succeeded, with participants eliminating tariffs on information technology goods under the Information Technology Agreement.

The other did not succeed, and that was the Environmental Goods Agreement (the EGA), upon which negotiations began in 2014. The fact that 195 nations entered the Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015 did not cause the Environmental Goods Agreement to become a reality.

The WTO Rules permit Members to take actions to protect the health and safety of their citizens. Regrettably export restrictions on medical supplies have in a number of instances been put into place in recent days, without notice or consultation. Emergency actions must not impose unwarranted restrictions on trade.

Nothing in the WTO rules prevents a roll-back of export restrictions.

Nothing in the WTO rules prevents subsidies from being granted to increase the global supply of medical products needed to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additional flexibility in the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property can facilitate countries' access to affordable life-saving medicines.

THE fifth priority is to facilitate the crafting a coordinated response

A number of Members have taken steps together to pledge to keep trade flows open, both with respect to imports and exports. Yesterday, on March 25, Canada, Australia, Chile, Brunei, New Zealand, New Zealand and Singapore joined together to make that commitment. A broader conversation among Members on next steps is underway.

WTO Members are also well aware of the useful suggestions made by trade experts, like the ones suggested by those on this program and are actively discussing appropriate responses.

The very important questions put by Simon Evenett of St. Gallen University, Wendy Cutler at the Asian Policy Institute, Jennifer Hillman at the Council on Foreign Relations, and Anabel González at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, as well as her colleagues, include:

whether tariffs can be eliminated on medical supplies,

whether export restrictions on these products can be lifted if already imposed, and eliminated if already in place, and

whether subsidies are needed to spur necessary production and economic activity?

The sixth priority is to assure the continuation of ongoing negotiations and work at the WTO

For the WTO, the next Ministerial meeting is as important as the 2020 Olympics was to Tokyo. It has to be rescheduled.

The pace of negotiations on key subjects such as E commerce, the moratorium on imposing on electronic commerce and curtailing fisheries subsidies is usually geared to the rhythm of meetings of trade ministers.

In addition, ideas on WTO reform, environmental issues, empowerment of women, and a host of other useful initiatives are stimulated by the fact of a ministerial being held. Intensive consultations with members as to the timing and venue of the next ministerial meeting and ministerial input are underway.

The circumstances brought about by the pandemic are unprecedented in our lifetimes and in the history of the multilateral trading system. They call for an unprecedented level of international cooperation.

The WTO was remarkably successful in avoiding the spread of protection during the Financial Crisis in 2008 and in the years following. There is nothing preventing WTO Members from engaging in a successful coordinated response to the coronavirus pandemic if the will exists to do so.

There are approximately 500 individuals on this conference call who are a self-selected cohort of those interested in the impact of Covid-19 on trade. Collectively and individually, you can have an impact by making your voices heard and your expertise available to trade policymakers.

THE UNITED NATIONS

GENEVA and Washington, D.C. – A new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Solidarity Response Fund will raise money from a wide range of donors to support the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) and partners to help countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund, the first-of-its-kind, enables private individuals, corporations and institutions anywhere in the world to come together to directly contribute to global response efforts, and has been created by the United Nations Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation, together with WHO.

“We are at a critical point in the global response to COVID-19 – we need everyone to get involved in this massive effort to keep the world safe,” said Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. “We are immensely grateful to the UN Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation for coming forward to help us set up this fund. A lot of people and institutions have been saying they want to contribute to the fight against the novel coronavirus. Now they can.”

The fund launches with major support already lined up, including from Facebook and Google who have instituted a matching scheme for funds raised through their platforms, while individual donors are also supporting the fund through www.COVID19ResponseFund.org.

“We can’t ignore the fact that this is a truly global problem – one that requires truly global solutions,” said Elizabeth Cousens, UN Foundation President and CEO. “The case for global cooperation could not be clearer – communities everywhere are affected, and people want to contribute. This new fund will create space for people everywhere, together, to fight this virus.”

Funds will go towards actions outlined in the COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to enable all countries – particularly those most vulnerable and at-risk, and with the weakest health systems – to prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 crisis including rapidly detecting cases, stopping transmission of the virus, and caring for those affected.

WHO and its partners are seeking financing for protective equipment for frontline health workers; to equip diagnostic laboratories; improve surveillance and data collection; establish and maintain intensive care units; strengthen supply chains; accelerate research and development of vaccines and therapeutics; and take other critical steps to scale up the public health response to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund is hosted by two foundations, the UN Foundation (registered in the United States) and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation (registered in Switzerland). Both foundations have established relationships with the World Health Organization, allowing for efficient transfer of financial resources to enable COVID-19 response efforts.

Apart from giving online at www.COVID19ResponseFund.org, the UN Foundation can also receive donations via check or wire from around the world by contacting COVID19Fund@unfoundation.org.

All donations made to the United Nations Foundation and Swiss Philanthropy Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent allowable by the law, where applicable (U.S. and Switzerland). Additionally, Swiss Philanthropy Foundation has partnered with Transnational Giving Europe to extend tax benefit to certain additional European countries where applicable.

The Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic is placing significant strains on health systems, essential public services and communities globally. UN entities are working closely with national governments, community groups, the health sector and industry to respond to this crisis with a multi-sectoral, equitable and human-rights focused approach.

UNV invites skilled professionals to support the UN system’s response as national UN Volunteers. Join efforts to mitigate the economic, social and health impacts of this crisis, and to safeguard progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. International UN Volunteers may telecommute or be deployed once travel restrictions are lifted.

The UN will also assist in the rapid procurement of materials for surveillance, prevention and control, and clinical management, said the UN’s Resident Coordinator in Nigeria Edward Kallon.

Mr Kallon was speaking at a meeting in the capital Abuja with members of the National Leadership on COVID-19 led by the Minister of Health Dr. Osagie Ehanire, as well as representatives of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Bank.

In addition, Mr. Kallon said that the UN will “immediately set up a Nigeria COVID-19 Response Fund… a single national platform and financing framework” that will foster coordination and effective mobilisation of resources and the deployment of strategies for impactful response.

He noted that the UN’s intervention was part of a strategy to ramp up response efforts and a recognition that collective efforts were urgently required in view of Nigeria’s socioeconomic situation.

Dr. Ehanire thanked the UN and assured that all financial and material support will be deployed to where it is most needed. He said the government was prepared for the best and worst scenarios.

The health minister emphasised that the government will continue to follow the containment strategy it has in place.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the NCDC had established Public Health Emergency Operations Centres in 23 of Nigeria’s 36 states to monitor and respond to infectious disease outbreaks. The centres have now been activated.

On 24 March the NCDC reported 44 confirmed cases, including 41 active cases, two discharged cases and one death.

UN humanitarian chief warns that failing to help vulnerable countries fight the coronavirus now could place millions at risk and leave the virus-free to circle back around the globe.

UN launches US$2 billion global humanitarian response to fight COVID-19 in 51 countries across South America, Africa, the Middle East and Asia.

Governments urged to commit to fully supporting the global humanitarian response plan, while sustaining funding to existing humanitarian appeals.

NEW YORK, 25 March 2020 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today launched a $2 billion coordinated global humanitarian response plan to fight COVID-19 in some of the world’s most vulnerable countries in a bid to protect millions of people and stop the virus from circling back around the globe.

COVID-19 has killed more than 16,000 people worldwide and there are nearly 400,000 reported cases. It has a foothold across the globe and is now reaching countries that were already facing humanitarian crisis because of conflict, natural disasters and climate change.

The response plan will be implemented by UN agencies, with international NGOs and NGO consortia playing a direct role in the response. It will:

deliver essential laboratory equipment to test for the virus, and medical supplies to treat people;

install handwashing stations in camps and settlements;

launch public information campaigns on how to protect yourself and others from the virus; and

establish airbridges and hubs across Africa, Asia and Latin America to move humanitarian workers and supplies to where they are needed most.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said:

“COVID-19 is menacing the whole of humanity – and so the whole of humanity must fight back. Individual country responses are not going to be enough.

“We must come to the aid of the ultra-vulnerable – millions upon millions of people who are least able to protect themselves. This is a matter of basic human solidarity. It is also crucial for combating the virus. This is the moment to step up for the vulnerable.”

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said:

“COVID-19 has already upended life in some of the world’s wealthiest countries. It is now reaching places where people live in warzones, cannot easily access clean water and soap, and have no hope of a hospital bed if they fall critically ill.

“To leave the world’s poorest and most vulnerable countries to their fate would be both cruel and unwise. If we leave coronavirus to spread freely in these places, we would be placing millions at high risk, whole regions will be tipped into chaos and the virus will have the opportunity to circle back around the globe.

“Countries battling the pandemic at home are rightly prioritizing people living in their own communities. But the hard truth is they will be failing to protect their own people if they do not act now to help the poorest countries protect themselves.

“Our priority is to help these countries prepare and continue helping the millions who rely on humanitarian assistance from the UN to survive. Properly funded, our global response effort will equip humanitarian organizations with the tools to fight the virus, save lives, and help contain the spread of COVID-19 worldwide.”

WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said:

“The virus is now spreading in countries with weak health systems, including some which are already facing humanitarian crises. These countries need our support – out of solidarity but also to protect us all and help suppress this pandemic. At the same time, we must not fight the pandemic at the expense of the other humanitarian health emergencies.”

UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore:

“Children are the hidden victims of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and school closures are affecting their education, mental health and access to basic health services. The risks of exploitation and abuse are higher than ever, for boys and girls alike. For children on the move or living through conflicts, the consequences will be unlike any we have ever seen. We must not let them down.”

At the virtual launch of the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, the UN Secretary-General was joined via video link by Mr. Lowcock, Dr Tedros and Ms. Fore.

Together they called on UN Member States to commit to stemming the impact of COVID-19 in vulnerable countries and containing the virus globally by giving the strongest possible support to the plan, while also sustaining core support to existing humanitarian appeals that help the more than 100 million people who already rely on humanitarian assistance from the UN just to survive.

Member States were warned that any diversion of funding from existing humanitarian operations would create an environment in which cholera, measles and meningitis can thrive, in which even more children become malnourished, and in which extremists can take control – an environment that would be the perfect breeding ground for the coronavirus.

To kick-start the response plan, Mr. Lowcock released an additional $60 million from the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). This brings CERF’s support to humanitarian action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to $75 million. In addition, country-based pooled funds have allocated more than $3 million so far.

This new CERF allocation – one of the largest ever made – will support: WFP to ensure the continuity of supply chains and transport of aid workers and relief goods; WHO to contain the spread of the pandemic; and other agencies to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to those most affected by the pandemic, including women and girls, refugees and internally displaced people. Support will include efforts around food security, physical and mental health, water and sanitation, nutrition and protection

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