

IHR Review Committee on second extensions for establishing national public health capacities and on IHR implementation

Questions and Answers

Questions specific to the upcoming meeting:

What is the the purpose of this IHR Review Committee?

- (1) To advise the Director-General on requests from States Parties on second extensions (2014 – 2016) for establishing the core capacities to detect and respond to events as specified by IHR Annex 1; and
- (2) To advise the Director-General on how to better strengthen and assess IHR core capacities.

Will this IHR Review Committee address the current Ebola outbreak?

No. This IHR Review Committee is separate from the IHR Emergency Committee on Ebola and will not review the response to the Ebola outbreak.

What are the requirements for obtaining a 2014-2016 extension?

States Parties must submit a formal request in writing to the Director-General not later than 15 April 2014. This should include an explanation of the exceptional circumstances that prevented the development and maintenance of the national IHR capacities, and a new implementation plan, to include the following elements:

1. a clear and specific identification of those capacity elements that are missing or inadequate;
2. a description of the activities and progress made in establishing those capacities to date;
3. a set of proposed actions that will be undertaken and a specified time frame to ensure the capacities are present; and
4. an estimate of the technical support and financial resources required to implement these activities; the proportion of these resources that will be invested from national budgets; and the extent of any external support required.

What is the role of the IHR Review Committee regarding second extensions?

To advise the Director-General. The IHR Review Committee will be convened on 13-14 November 2014.

How will the IHR Review Committee proceed in order to provide its advice?

Before the meeting, data and analyses pertaining on countries seeking an extension were provided to members of the Review Committee.

During the meeting, each request for extension will be considered. The review will include a panel discussion with Regional Office representatives on the status of requests; status of core capacities; major initiatives in the Region for core capacity development; mechanisms of the Regional and Country offices for coordination with major donor initiatives; impediments and challenges; and potential solutions to ensure countries function optimally, in view of their diversity.

How many States Parties have met the IHR core capacities requirements so far?

By the initial deadline in 2012, 42 of the 195 States Parties declared they had met their core capacity requirements under the IHR.

By the end of June 2014, an additional 21 States Parties declared that they met IHR core capacity requirements. A total of 63 States Parties (32%) have declared their compliance with IHR requirements.

How many States Parties have formally requested extensions through 2016?

By November 2014, 81 States Parties (40%) had requested an additional two-year extension; 49 (25%) have not yet communicated their intentions to WHO.

How will WHO deal with States Parties not having communicated whether they achieved the IHR core capacities?

WHO will continue to follow up with the 49 States Parties.

What will happen after 2016? Will the IHR Review Committee provide advice on this issue?

The Review Committee may advise the DG on how to proceed and might suggest a regional consultative process.

General questions related to the implementation of IHR Core Capacities:

What are the International Health Regulations?

The Regulations constitute the global legal agreement against the international spread of disease. Their purpose is to support national and international efforts to contain or reduce the risk from acute public health threats, while limiting interference with international travel and trade. The Regulations are legally binding on all WHO Member States.

What does implementation of IHR Core Capacities mean?

One of the most important provisions in the IHR is the obligation for all States to establish core capacities to detect, assess, report and respond to potential public health events of international concern. These IHR capacities, outlined in Annex 1 of the Regulations, are focused on two areas: public health surveillance and response, and capacities for public health actions at international ports, airports and ground crossings designated by the State.

Why are IHR core capacities so important?

Effective national surveillance and response systems are the best way to prevent the spread of diseases from one country to another.

By when do the IHR core capacities need to be established?

By 2016.

How has WHO supported the assessment of IHR capacities of countries?

WHO developed a monitoring framework to help Member States assess their capacities. WHO also provides direct technical assistance when requested.