

THE NEW FACE OF PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 GPMB report, *The New Face of Pandemic Preparedness*, emphasizes the urgent need to transform global health security in a world that is experiencing new volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity while still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pandemics have profound and lasting impacts, which extend beyond health to disrupt economies, societies, and governance systems. Despite advances in science and technology, the world remains vulnerable to future pandemics due to persistent inequities, mistrust, and underinvestment in preparedness.

A paradigm shift is needed. The 2025 GPMB report is anchored in three fundamental recommendations to drive preparedness for pandemics, as well as epidemics and outbreaks, in a volatile world: **care**, **measure** and **cooperate**.

Figure 1. 2025 GPMB recommendations

Invest in **strong primary health care** that protects frontline health workers, enhances community engagement and leads to more resilient systems



Establish a **comprehensive pandemic risk monitoring system** that tracks threats, vulnerabilities and preparedness in real time, integrating health, social, economic and environmental data into clear signals for leaders

Finalize, ratify and finance the **WHO Pandemic Agreement with a Pathogen Access and Benefits Sharing (PABS) system** to enhance collaboration, cooperation and solidarity in future crises

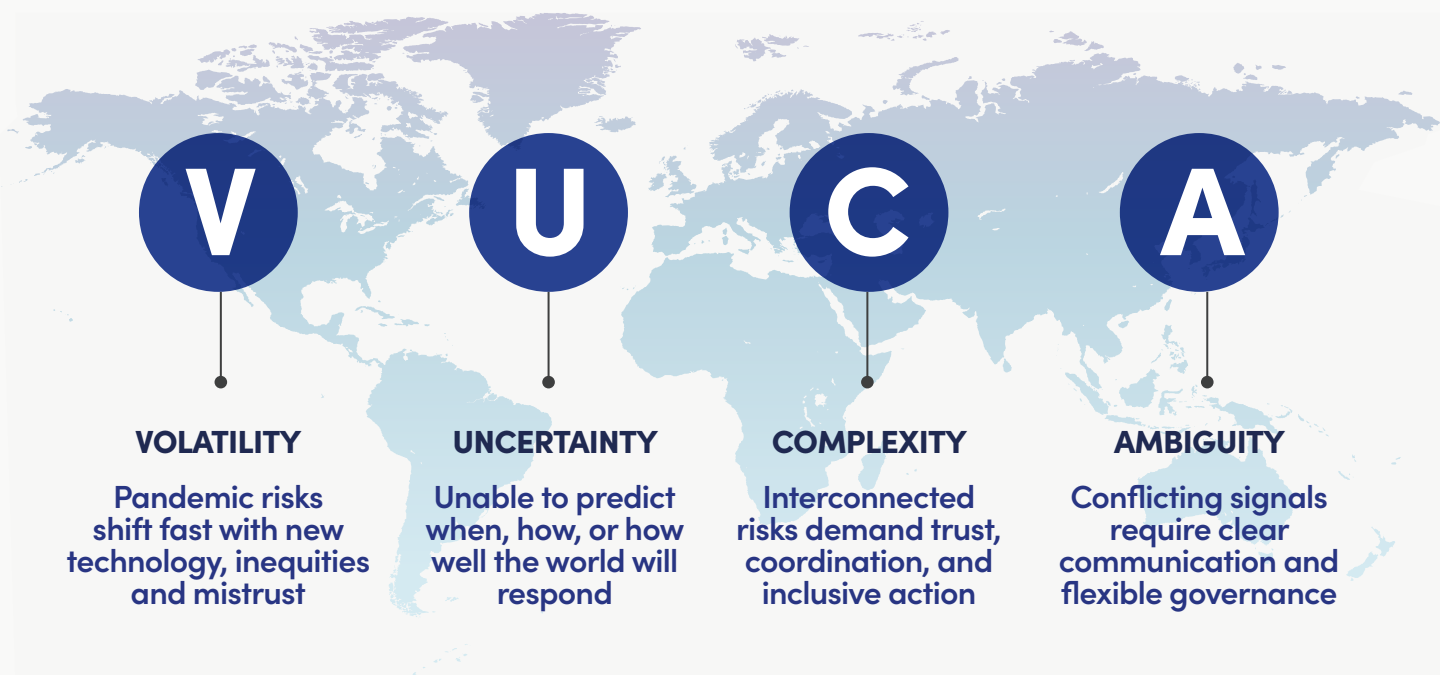
A world of uncertainty

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed critical gaps in global preparedness and response. Its cascading effects — economic losses in tens of US\$ trillions, over 20 million estimated deaths, and disruptions to education, mental health, and social cohesion — revealed systemic weaknesses. Key lessons include:

- **Multidimensional impact:** Pandemics are not just health crises, but social and economic quakes that deepen inequalities and erode trust.
- **Unintended consequences:** Public health and social measures (PHSM), while necessary, often lacked strategies to mitigate their economic and social fall-out.
- **Fragmented governance:** Geopolitical tensions and weakened multilateralism hindered coordinated responses, exacerbating global inequities in access to vaccines and treatments.

These lessons reveal that pandemics emerge in an interconnected, unstable world: one demanding new approaches to preparedness. After the Cold War, the collapse of a long-standing world order gave rise to what strategic leaders called a VUCA world, marked by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity.

Figure 2. Preparedness in a VUCA world



The GPMB emphasizes five key areas of focus to radically reinforce pandemic preparedness and to better cope with this volatile and uncertain risk environment:

- **Primary defences** at the frontline of pandemic emergence
- **Novel and reinvigorated governance** that can better mobilize adaptive responses
- **Data analytics** for better decision-making
- **Multisectoral collaboration** for integrated preparedness
- **Critical health response capacities**

The path forward for 2026: care, measure, cooperate

care

A more resilient system begins with strong primary health care that can detect and respond to the first wave of cases while maintaining essential services. Integrating One Health principles into frontline surveillance is essential, because most emerging pathogens originate in animals. Accelerated research into broad-spectrum antivirals and rapid diagnostics can make rapid response more available while vaccines are produced, and support equity in access to countermeasures.

Protecting the frontline health workforce is critical to maintaining service capacity during crises. Enhanced community engagement will lessen the disruption caused by public health and social measures and boost pandemic prevention and containment.

measure

A comprehensive pandemic risk monitoring system must be established that tracks threats, vulnerabilities and preparedness in real time. A system that brings together multiple stakeholders to collaborate, integrates epidemiological, economic, social, and environmental data into a single decision-support platform and deploys new technologies to improve the efficiency and timeliness of data analysis can transform preparedness.

Such a system would allow leaders to view pandemic risk in comprehensive, near-real-time terms, improve forecasting, and facilitate more effective resource allocation.

GPMB calls for the development of a global pandemic risk observatory

An observatory—or similar global mechanism—would consolidate and align analyses conducted by various entities, offering an overarching view of pandemic risks. This would enable policy-makers to access timely, accurate and relevant insights to guide preparedness and response strategies.

Such a mechanism should align with international frameworks, including the amended International Health Regulations and the new WHO Pandemic Agreement, to ensure complementarity and reinforce their effectiveness. Its governance should reflect the realities of the global health architecture with meaningful participation from national, regional and international actors. It will require sustained political and financial support to ensure its independence, and should be mandated to monitor trends in pandemic risk drivers, assess global vulnerabilities, and provide actionable information to guide strategic planning and investment.

cooperate

Ratification, implementation and financing of the WHO Pandemic Agreement, with a Pathogen Access and Benefits Sharing (PABS) system, and alongside the continued implementation of the amended International Health Regulations, are essential for enhancing the timely and fair sharing of samples, data and medical products. Regional institutions are well placed to organize cross-border surge operations and pooled procurement.

Financial mechanisms should align disbursements with measurable preparedness targets and maximize investment from both public and private sector channels, nationally, regionally and globally. Civil society networks that proved indispensable during COVID-19 need predictable funding and formal roles in preparedness plans to sustain risk communication, logistics and service delivery.

Conclusion

Future pandemics will exploit the vulnerabilities caused by inequity and mistrust unless systemic reforms are adopted. By investing in care systems, robust monitoring tools, and international cooperation, the world can mitigate the catastrophic impacts of future health crises. Adoption of the WHO Pandemic Agreement is a beacon of hope in a world weighed down by crisis. Born out of the depth of COVID-19's impact, it signals that nations are prepared to work through their different perspectives and come to agreement on their common interests.

Building strong primary health care systems, monitoring the full spectrum of pandemic risk and impacts, and strengthening cooperation across sectors and borders – including ratification of the WHO Pandemic Agreement – will determine whether the next outbreak due to a pandemic-prone pathogen becomes a manageable event or a repeat of recent global upheaval.

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The Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB) is an independent monitoring and accountability body established in 2018 by WHO and the World Bank to strengthen preparedness for global health crises. Composed of political leaders, agency principals, and world-class experts, the Board provides independent, authoritative assessments of global progress in building and sustaining the capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to disease outbreaks, epidemics, pandemics, and other health emergencies.