
World Health Organization
148th session of the Executive Board, 18–26 January 2021

**Item 14.3 - Mental Health Preparedness and Response for the COVID-19
Pandemic**

Thank you moderator,

Director General, Member States, Excellencies,

For too long, mental health was a neglected issue and the State of Israel supports the WHO's stance on ensuring that mental health is placed at the forefront of our discussions, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic which has had such a negative impact on mental health worldwide.

One of the most significant challenges of this pandemic has been the strain on people's mental health due to fatigue, uncertainty, isolation, and several other reasons. It is critical to recognize that the pandemic has taken its toll on all of us- even those who may have been considered mentally healthy before the pandemic. We have all felt the effects of COVID-19, and we must come together to support one another to ensure that we do everything we can for the mental health of peoples worldwide during this time.

This is one of the many reasons the WHO's work during COVID-19 has been critical for health systems everywhere. On the national, regional, and global level, we must not forget our duty to ensure that mental health and well-being is properly addressed in our pandemic response, and the WHO has ensured that there is sufficient advice on exactly how to do this.

We support the WHO's position paper's recommended actions, specifically to apply a whole-of-society approach to promote, protect, and care for mental health. We, in Israel have been especially grateful to the social workers, psychologists, nurses, doctors, who have been integral in guaranteeing mental health care where needed, but also to civil societies and volunteers who have offered themselves to this cause. In Israel, our "Protect the Mothers and Fathers" programme has been a calculated

success, both in protecting the physical and mental health of the elderly population in Israel, who have found themselves especially strained and isolated during this pandemic.

We also support the WHO's recommendation to ensure widespread availability of emergency mental health and psychological support. In Israel, we have recognized the importance of these services, and offer them in the many languages for our population to maximize patient's comfort and ensure the best possible mental health care.

Lastly, as we have stated, one of the most important lessons to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is how we can strengthen services for the future. For that reason, we support the WHO's recommendation to build and strengthen mental health services in the future, especially to ensure that mental health services are a part of universal health coverage packages for equal and high-quality access for the whole of the population.

Thank you for ensuring this critical topic is highlighted.