

World dangerously unprepared for next pandemic: monitor

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As the world grapples with the devastating coronavirus pandemic, it is doing far too little to prepare for future, possibly even more damaging pandemics, a global health monitor warned Monday.

In a fresh report, the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board (GPMB), an independent body created by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, decried that the coronavirus [pandemic](#) had revealed how little the world had focused on preparing for such disasters, despite ample warnings that large disease outbreaks were inevitable.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is providing a harsh test of the world's preparedness," the report said, concluding that little progress had been made on any of the actions it had called for in its initial report last year, before COVID-19 struck.

"Failure to learn the lessons of COVID-19 or to act on them with the necessary resources and commitment will mean that the next pandemic, which is sure to come, will be even more damaging," it warned.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, GPMB co-chair and a former WHO chief, stressed during the virtual launch of the report Monday that the board had warned a year ago that the world was ill prepared for a pandemic.

"Tragically and catastrophically we have seen our worst fears realised," she said.

"The impact of COVID-19 is even worse than we anticipated, but actions that we called for last year, have still not been taken."

The report comes as the global death toll from the novel coronavirus nears the one million-mark, out of the close to 30 million known cases since COVID-19 first emerged in China late last year.

'Panic and neglect'

Brundtland, also a former Norwegian prime minister, insisted that it was time to break the "cycle of panic and neglect" that had unleashed the

"catastrophic" consequences of the COVID-19.

The global Preparedness Monitoring Board is again calling for broad global cooperation and significant, long-term financing of pandemic preparedness and prevention.

It urged the UN, the WHO and international financial institutions like the World Bank to convene a summit on the global health emergency, aimed at agreeing on an international framework for [emergency preparedness](#) and response.

The framework should include among other things a "mechanism" to ensure "sustainable, predictable financing on the scale that is required," Brundtland said.

"The return on investment in [pandemic preparedness](#) is immense," she said, pointing out that "estimates of the cost of prevention and preparedness are measured in billions of dollars, but the cost of a pandemic is measured in trillions."

Current WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus agreed, telling the virtual event that "spending on health and preparedness is not charity. It is an investment in our future."

Not investing in preparedness, he said, is "as if we wait for the plane to crash and then call for more safety inspections; we wait until the town burns down, then decide we need a fire department."

Tedros stressed that COVID-19 "will not be the last pandemic, nor the last global health emergency".

"Every day that we stand by and do nothing is a day that brings us closer to the next global health emergency, whether from a disease outbreak,

[climate change](#) or a natural or self-inflicted disaster," he said.

"We do not know what the next global health emergency will be, but we know it will come, and we must be prepared."

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