

REPORT OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The work of WHO in the Western Pacific Region
1 July 2019 – 30 June 2020



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Report of the Regional Director: the work of WHO in the Western Pacific Region 1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Message from the Regional Director	4
WHO Western Pacific Region	8
Chapter 2: Responding to COVID-19 as we drive the vision of <i>For the Future</i>	10
Chapter 3: The COVID-19 response in the Region: standing in solidarity	14
Chapter 4: Delivering results	24
WHO in the Western Pacific Region	26
Western Pacific Regional Office Structure	27
Data, Strategy and Innovation	28
Division of Health Systems and Services	36
Division of Healthy Environments and Populations	42
Division of Programmes for Disease Control	48
Division of Health Security and Emergencies	56
Division of Pacific Technical Support	64
Leadership, management and administration	72
Chapter 5: Moving forward	80



Khoksivilay Health Center in Xaithany District, Lao People's Democratic Republic.

01

Message from the Regional Director

I am pleased to present my second annual report to Member States on the work of the World Health Organization (WHO) in the Western Pacific Region.

Covering the period from July 2019 to June 2020, this Report shows a world truly changed. It highlights how we have been responding to the largest, most challenging public health event in a hundred years, COVID-19, while at the same time driving forward our vision to make the Western Pacific the healthiest and safest region.

Member States unanimously endorsed our shared vision *For the Future: Towards the Healthiest and Safest Region* in 2019. Recognizing the need to address the challenges of tomorrow, the vision lays out four priority themes: health security, including antimicrobial resistance; noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and ageing; climate change and the environment; and reaching the unreached.

Few could have predicted just how quickly one of those future priorities, health security, would arrive and challenge not only the capacity of our health systems, but also the resilience of our societies and economies.

This year's Report describes how we have been supporting Member States to respond to the pandemic. In this Region, we have been investing for decades in health emergency preparedness and response. Since the first report of a cluster of pneumonia cases of unknown origin in Wuhan, China, on 31 December 2019, WHO in the Western Pacific has been supporting Member States to translate that preparedness into action. Our shared experiences with SARS and H1N1 influenza have taught us invaluable lessons that we are now leveraging to strengthen the response to the pandemic together.

This Report also highlights how we have been driving forward the *For the Future* vision during the time of COVID-19. The pandemic has changed many of our plans, but it has not changed our resolve to make that vision a reality. While responding to COVID-19, WHO in the Western Pacific has continued to deliver on our other essential work for Member

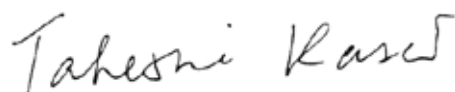
Countries and communities have demonstrated an overwhelming drive to develop innovative approaches, form new partnerships and build solutions from the “grounds up”.

States. COVID-19 reminded us how quickly the world around us can change, and why the *For the Future* vision is more relevant than ever.

In many ways, the COVID-19 response has been a springboard for priority actions that we were already committed to take. Countries and communities have demonstrated an overwhelming drive to develop innovative approaches, form new partnerships and build solutions from the “grounds up”.

The pandemic was a predictable encounter with the future. As we work to mitigate its effects and strengthen health security overall, we must also continue to move forward on our other priorities for the future: ageing and the surge of NCDs; climate change and environmental degradation; and reaching the unreached. All represent inevitable challenges for the Western Pacific Region. Over the coming years, it will be vital that we continue to work towards the challenges of today, and the future.

Thank you for your continued trust as we work together to make this Region the healthiest and safest in the world.



Takeshi Kasai, MD, Ph. D.

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