

International Health Regulation amendment update

News article

07 June 2024

On 1 June, the World Health Assembly adopted amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR).

New Zealand will have 18 months to consider whether to accept, reject or reserve against the amendments and a further 6 months before they come into force. These decisions will be subject to the full treaty making process including Cabinet approval, a National Interest Analysis and Parliamentary Treaty Examination. This will include consideration of the amendment to Article 59 in 2022, which New Zealand rejected in November 2023 to give the new government time to consider the amendment.

The IHR aims to prevent and control the spread of disease, and other public health hazards between countries, to protect the health of all people. They define countries' rights and obligations in handling public health events and emergencies that have the potential to cross borders, such as pandemic.

New Zealand is a party to the IHR, which were first adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1969. They have been amended several times since then, most significantly in 2005. The new set of IHR amendments include:

- **Introducing a definition of a pandemic emergency** to trigger more effective international collaboration in response to events that are at risk of becoming, or have become, a pandemic.
- A commitment to solidarity and equity on **strengthening access to medical products and financing**. This includes establishing a coordinating financial mechanism to support identification of, and access to, financing required to “equitably address the needs and priorities of developing countries.

- Establishing a **state parties committee** to facilitate the effective implementation of the amended Regulations. The committee will promote and support cooperation among States Parties for the effective implementation of the IHR.
- Creation of **national IHR authorities** to improve coordination of implementation of the regulations within and among countries. Countries will have the flexibility to determine how to best establish this function.

The IHR amendments are separate from the Pandemic Agreement. The Pandemic Agreement negotiations were not concluded at the 77th World Health Assembly and have been extended by one year. More information about both the IHR amendments and the Agreement can be found on the [World Health Organization website \(https://www.who.int/news/item/01-06-2024-world-health-assembly-agreement-reached-on-wide-ranging-decisive-package-of-amendments-to-improve-the-international-health-regulations--and-sets-date-for-finalizing-negotiations-on-a-proposed-pandemic-agreement\)](https://www.who.int/news/item/01-06-2024-world-health-assembly-agreement-reached-on-wide-ranging-decisive-package-of-amendments-to-improve-the-international-health-regulations--and-sets-date-for-finalizing-negotiations-on-a-proposed-pandemic-agreement).