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International Health Emergencies in Failed and Failing States

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INTERNATIONAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES IN FAILED AND FAILING STATES

Chiara Giorgetti*

ABSTRACT

Global health emergencies, particularly those occurring in failed and failing States, can become threats to the stability of the international community. This Article assesses the international mechanisms available to respond to such emergencies. After defining global health emergencies, it discusses the implications of global outbreaks in failed and failing States. It then examines the role played by the World Health Organization in controlling global health emergencies, with particular reference to the newly amended 2005 International Health Regulations and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network. Finally, it explores the role of other international organizations, including the United Nations Children’s Fund and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in addressing global health emergencies in failed or failing States. While no comprehensive and mandatory action plan exists to deal with global health emergencies, the tools developed by the World Health Organization and other international organizations are proving to be effective in dealing with global health emergencies so far. The lack of enforcement measures seems to be compensated by cooperation and voluntary actions by Member States, and significant non-State actor involvement. The lingering question is how to ensure that actions are taken in a timely and comprehensive manner in all global health emergencies.

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Globalization and the spread of disease have made public health a matter of international concern. This is particularly true in situations of trans-boundary health emergencies, as demonstrated by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Ebola epidemics, and more recently by the cholera outbreak in post-earthquake Haiti and the outbreaks of H1N1 and H3N2 influenza. Often, these emergencies cannot be addressed exclusively by one State, but must instead be addressed by the international community as a whole. The difficulties of successfully addressing trans-boundary health emergencies are compounded in situations of failed and failing States, where governments lack the power to control their territories and populations.

This Article explores mechanisms available to respond to public health emergencies in failed and failing States, with the goal of assessing their effectiveness and identifying existing challenges. First, the Article defines health emergencies and State failure. Next, it examines the role played by the World Health Organization (WHO) in controlling global health emergencies, in particular through the International Health Regulations (IHR) and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN). Finally, it discusses the role of other international organizations, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in global health emergencies in failed or failing States.
States. While no comprehensive and mandatory action plan exists to deal with global health emergencies, the tools developed by WHO and other international organizations have often proven to be effective in dealing with global health emergencies. The lack of binding enforcement measures seems to have been compensated by voluntary activities and cooperation by Member States and non-State actors. The question that still needs to be resolved, however, is how to ensure that actions are taken in a timely and comprehensive manner in all global health emergencies, even when the State at the center of the crisis is reluctant or unable to provide assistance. In these situations, IHR 2005 and GOARN can be used symbiotically to ensure a coordinated response to health emergencies in failed and failing States. In this way, WHO can play a fundamental role to ensure that health emergencies are detected and temporary recommendations are approved and implemented. It is important to ensure that WHO acts within its given powers and is provided the appropriate support and tools to carry out its mandate.

II. HEALTH EMERGENCIES AS GLOBAL SECURITY ISSUES

Health has become a central topic of international law. Its importance is recognized in several international and regional instruments, such as the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN Charter cites the need to collaborate on health issues in several articles, and several interna-


4. Article 13 states "The General Assembly shall initiate studies and make recommendations for the purpose of (b) promoting international co-operation in the ... health fields". U.N. Charter art. 13 ¶ 1. Article 55 affirms "With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote: (b) solutions of international economics, social, health. " Id. at art. 55. Article 57 further states: "The various specialized agencies, established by intergovernmental agreement and having wide international responsibilities, as defined in their basic instruments, in ... health, and related fields, shall be brought into relationship with the United Nations in accordance with the provision of Article 63." Id. at art. 57 ¶ 1. Finally, Article 62 states "The Economic and Social Council may make or initiate studies and reports with respect to ... health and related matters and may make recommendations with respect to any such matters to the General Assembly, to the Members of the United Nations, and to the specialized agencies concerned." Id. at art. 62 ¶ 1.
tional organizations now include health-related mandates, including WHO and UNICEF.\(^5\)

Public health has increasingly become a global issue. Faster, easier, and cheaper transportation methods have resulted in a phenomenal increase in the movement of people and goods,\(^6\) and new conservation technologies have improved the international trade of perishable goods.\(^7\) These developments have made it easier for diseases to spread faster and to more distant locations.\(^8\) Indeed, easier movement of people and goods has facilitated not only the spread of infectious diseases, but also their emergence and reemergence in both humans and animals.\(^9\) Accordingly, global health\(^10\) has become an important concern for the international community. Globalization has, to a certain extent, undermined the ability of one State, acting alone, to protect its people from the spread of infectious diseases. As a result, it has become clear that only collective efforts can efficiently address

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10. The term 'global health' is preferred to 'international health' because, as Støre et al. explain, "global health' is rapidly overtaking the paradigm of 'international health' as the organizing principle for health cooperation. While the latter term focuses on relations among sovereign nations, the concept of global health encompasses health affairs within and among nations-states, as well as transnational challenges not defined by political borders. Global health thus recognizes multiple actor groups in the production of health, including but not limited to national government." J. G. Støre et al., Health and Security for a Global Century, in GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR HUMAN SECURITY 67-68 (L. Chen, et al. eds., 2003).
public health emergencies.

Deadly diseases like tuberculosis, malaria, and cholera are still widespread in many regions of the world. Some of their pathogens are becoming drug-resistant, and thus more difficult to cure and isolate. Some diseases are spreading into previously disease-free regions. Moreover, new infectious diseases, such as SARS and Ebola hemorrhagic fever, typically have trans-boundary effects, and thus can only be properly handled by the coordinated actions of multiple national and international actors. As global health expert Professor David Fidler concludes, "most public health experts agree that the distinction between national and international public health is no longer relevant because globalization has enabled pathogenic microbes to spread illness and death globally."

Finally, the connection between national security and health has also become apparent. Significantly, States have begun to identify certain


13. For example, cases of West Nile fever were recently diagnosed in New York City. Additionally, a new wave of tuberculosis—which is resistant to usual medications—has been found in Europe and in the United States. Denghi Hemorrhagic Fever is now considered endemic in fifty countries, a significant rise from the only nine countries considered endemic before 1970. See Gro Harlem Brundtland, Dir. Gen., WORLD HEALTH ORG., Failed States and Global Security: How Health Can Contribute to a Safer World (Sept. 26, 2002), available at http://www.brookings.edu/ media/events/2002/09/26global-health.


16. There is a new growing literature on this phenomenon. See, e.g., GLOBAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR HUMAN SECURITY (L. Chen et al. eds., 2003) (especially J. G. Støre et al., Health and Security for a Global Century; and D. L. Heymann, Evolving Infectious Disease Threats to National and Global Security; Jack C. Chow, Health and International Security, 19 WASH. Q. 2, 63-77 (1996); J. B. Tucker, & R. P. Kadlec, Infectious Disease and National Security, 29 STRATEGIC REV. 12-20 (2001). Heymann affirms: "This principle [of global public health security] has evolved in response to three concurrent trends. First, the highly publicized resurgence of the infectious disease threat illustrated the vulnerability of all nations to outbreaks and epidemics, often of new or unusual diseases. Second, the impact of AIDS on sub-Saharan Africa demonstrated the capacity of an emerging disease to destabilize a large geographical region in ways that undermine the very
diseases as national security threats and have developed measures to halt and control the spread of these diseases as part of their foreign policies. For example, in 2000, the Clinton administration for the first time declared AIDS a threat to the United States' national security and global stability and mandated the U.S. National Security Council to develop an appropriate response. President Obama shared the same understanding of the HIV/AIDS epidemic through a President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. UNAIDS, the joint UN program on

infrastructures needed for governance. Third, a reconsideration of the determinants of national security broadened the perception of what constitutes a security threat in the post-Cold War era, making space to accommodate infectious diseases—at least in their most internationally disruptive forms." Heymann, supra, at 106; see also Javed Siddiqi, "World Health and World Politics: The World Health Organization and the UN System" (1995).


HIV/AIDS, also advocates for a global response. 21 Similarly and more broadly, in the 2005 UN World Summit Outcome Document, States recognized that "HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases pose severe risks for the entire world and serious challenges to the achievement of development goals." 22

These legal, security, and policy developments have made it clear that public health has become a matter of international concern, one that often cannot be addressed exclusively by one State, but that requires action by the international community as a whole. Undoubtedly, there is currently a certain degree of collaboration among States on some public health matters. Several multilateral organizations exist at the regional level and collaborate on health issues. 23

Various international organizations, including WHO and UNICEF, 24 have also assumed coordination and facilitation roles in international public health matters. For example, epidemiologists from around the world meet periodically at the WHO Headquarters in Geneva to identify and recommend the most effective vaccine for the upcoming influenza season. 25 In addition, several international, national, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) intervene in support of national health sectors during humanitarian crises—which often occur in


23. For example, the Pan American Health Organization. See PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION, http://www.paho.org/usa/ (last visited June 14, 2013).

24. UNICEF was established by a Resolution of the UN General Assembly on 11 December 1946. UNICEF is a semi-autonomous Agency of the UN system. It is headed by a 30-members Executive Board and an Executive Director elected by the UN Economic and Social Council. Its "purpose is to help developing countries improve the condition of their children and youths. It aids country projects, preferably those which form part of national programs of development." It assists countries only at the request of their government. See Amos J. Paeslee, UNICEF, in INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, Part I, Vol. II, 1398.

situations of conflict and State failure—and provide basic health care. 26

However, there are currently no binding general agreements that address the problem of global health emergencies, and no agreements on comprehensive plans or specific actions in situations of transboundary health emergencies. 27 Members of the international community realized that this lacuna was potentially deeply problematic during the game-changing 2002 SARS virus epidemic in China.

SARS, a serious form of highly contagious viral pneumonia, was first diagnosed in Southern China in 2003 and eventually spread to twenty-seven countries—including Hong Kong, Canada, the Philippines, Russia, and Spain—allegedly causing 774 deaths. 28 The Chinese authorities initially failed to report the new disease to WHO and, in fact, tried to conceal its existence. 29 The Chinese government revealed the extent of the epidemic only in March 2003, after mounting media and political pressure, and after the disease was diagnosed in other countries. 30 At that time, it allowed a WHO team to enter its territory and assess the situation for the first time. 31 By that point, the alarm caused by a new, unknown disease had already spread worldwide, and WHO had issued a global alert for the disease. 32 WHO was also able to release daily updates describing the progress of the epidemic and controlling

26. These include UNICEF, UNDP, OCHA, the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), US Aid International Development Office ("USAID"), Medicines Sans Frontières, Oxfam, and many others. Their programs, often carried out jointly, typically include the establishment of field health clinics and monitor centers, mother-and-child care, provision of water and food, vaccination and sanitation campaigns.

27. See A SAFER FUTURE, supra note 10, at 66.


29. See Yanzhong Huang, The SARS Epidemic and Its Aftermath in China: A Political Perspective, in LEARNING FROM SARS: PREPARING FOR THE NEXT DISEASE OUTBREAK (Stacey Knobler et al. eds., 2004), available at http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK92479/ (asserting that "the public was kept uninformed about the disease. According to the Implementing Regulations on the State Secrets Law regarding the handling of public health–related information, any occurrence of infectious diseases should be classified as a state secret before they are "announced by the Ministry of Health or organs authorized by the Ministry." In other words, until such time as the Ministry chose to make information about the disease public, any physician or journalist who reported on the disease would risk being persecuted for leaking state secrets ... A virtual news blackout about SARS thus continued well into February [2003]").

30. Id. (stating "WHO experts were invited to China by the Ministry of Health but were not allowed to have access to Guangdong until April 2 [2003]").

31. Id. (stating "WHO experts were invited to China by the Ministry of Health but were not allowed to have access to Guangdong until April 2 [2003]").

efforts with the support of reports from national health monitor systems and several governments.\textsuperscript{33} WHO issued a travel alert discouraging travel to several countries in Asia and to Canada, where the virus had already been diagnosed and resulted in casualties. WHO's vigorous and coordinated response bore fruit, and by the beginning of July, the epidemic had been stopped.\textsuperscript{34}

The reactions to the SARS epidemic are instructive for several reasons. On the one hand, the initial mishandling of the epidemic by the Chinese authorities demonstrated the need for coordinated intervention by international actors in situations of global health emergencies. China's response revealed the limitations of the existing emergency control system. In fact, had China declared the emergency sooner, the result of the epidemic would have been far less serious, and effective control measures could have been implemented much earlier. Instead, China designated any news relating to the epidemic as State secrets and denied access to outside actors, including WHO and the media, for several crucial months.\textsuperscript{35} This not only aggravated the situation, but also epitomized the limitation of the international legal system, where little action is allowed without State consent.

On the other hand, the SARS example also provides some positive lessons. First, the international reaction to the spread of SARS demonstrated that WHO has the ability to successfully manage and control a potential global crisis. Second, it proved that the international community as a whole can exercise pressure and show cohesion when needed. Indeed, information related to the outbreak was reported by individuals and non-governmental groups, which alerted other actors in the international community.\textsuperscript{36} WHO then verified the reports and requested more information from the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{37} Moreover,
once the epidemic was confirmed, WHO issued several global alerts, including travel warnings.38 This was the first time that such restrictions were imposed, and although WHO did not have a clear mandate to issue such alerts, Member States generally complied with them.39

III. HEALTH SYSTEMS IN FAILED AND FAILING STATES

The SARS epidemic crystallized the consensus within the international community that public health emergencies require common action. This is particularly necessary in failed and failing States, where the threats to the population brought by the spread of viruses, the emergence and re-emergence of diseases, and the international security implications of health emergencies are magnified.40

Many developing countries struggle in their efforts to ensure appropriate health standards for their citizens. The conditions of national public health systems, especially in certain low-income and highly indebted countries, have improved little in the last fifty years.41 In most developing countries, social and environmental conditions benefit opportunistic microbes.42 Further, several diseases are becoming drug-resistant, including diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, which have developed antimicrobial resistance.43 As a consequence, public

39. See David P. Fidler, Development Involving SARS, International Law, and the Infectious Disease Control at the Fifty-Sixth Meeting of the World Health Assembly, ASIL INSIGHTS, June 2003 (note that despite the Canadian government’s objection, Toronto was included on the list of places where travel was discouraged).
42. David D. Fidler, The Globalisation of Public Health: Emerging Infectious Diseases and International Relations, as quoted in Fidler, supra note 3, at 22. Fidler identifies the following parts for the pathology for the globalization of public health in the era of emerging infectious diseases: “1. international trade and travel as effective channels for infectious diseases spread; 2. deteriorating or nonexistent public health capabilities, including the declining effectiveness of antimicrobial drugs; 3. the failure of the internationalization of public health; 4. the development of unprecedented levels of deeply rooted social, economic, and environmental problems that provide pathogenic microbes with fertile conditions.” Id.
43. See Multidrug-Resistant Tuberculosis, supra note 12.
health systems in developing countries remain inadequate and often incapable of coping with health emergencies, such as epidemics and the discovery of new infectious diseases.\textsuperscript{44}

The situation of failing and failed States is particularly daunting. Failed States are characterized by an implosion of State structure, which results in the incapability of governmental authorities to perform their functions, which include providing security, respecting the rule of law, exercising control, supplying education and health services, and maintaining economic and structural infrastructures.\textsuperscript{45} Failed States are, by definition, unable to provide basic political and social goods to their people. Often, their health care systems are all but collapsed.\textsuperscript{46} Moreover, the spread of disease and new epidemics cannot be properly monitored and controlled.\textsuperscript{47} One of the defining characteristics of State failure is a State's growing inability to provide basic health care, which results in a decline in health indicators like infant mortality and life expectancy.\textsuperscript{48} Based on this definition, former WHO Director-

\textsuperscript{44} WHO further affirms: "Newly recognized and familiar pathogens have reasserted their epidemic potential as: 1. Development gaps have widened, leaving many countries unable to provide adequate basic services such as safe water, adequate nutrition, waste disposal and health care for their populations. 2. Governmental and public health care systems in many countries have collapsed due to civil strife and war. 3. Poverty, urbanization and population displacement have led to concentration of human populations in conditions that favour major outbreaks (e.g. refugee camps, urban slums). 4. Exploitation of pristine environments is exposing human populations to new infectious agents. 5. Diseases within animal populations cross into human populations. 6. Environmental change may alter the endemicity and transmission patterns of pathogens. 7. Ineffectve vector control programmes have led to a proliferation of vectors, including resistant vector populations. 8. The development of antimicrobial resistance now threatens to make once curable diseases incurable. 9. The potential for accelerated spread of disease has increased markedly with globalization of travel and trade. 10. The situation is further compounded by inappropriate social, political and economic responses to epidemics with implementation of misguided measures to control disease spread." WHO Dept' of Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response, A Framework for Global Outbreak Alert and Response, WHO/ CDS/CSR/2000.2, at 1, available at http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/surveillance/ whoccnscr2002.pdf.

\textsuperscript{45} State failure results from several interlinked causes, both endogenous and exogenous to the State. Endogenous causes include corruption, structural weaknesses, and misadministration. Exogenous causes include macroeconomic and political policies, foreign interventions either in support of those in power or opposition groups, or decline of foreign financial and political support. For an overview of State failure and international law, see GIORGETTI, supra note 2.

\textsuperscript{46} For relevant health data, see Mortality Rate, Under-5, WORLD BANK, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.DYN.MORT/countries/1W-SO?display=graph (last visited July 17, 2013).


\textsuperscript{48} See id.; see also Collapsed States, The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority (I. William Zartman ed., 1995).
General, Doctor Gro Brundtland, suggests that almost a third of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lives in countries that can be defined as weak and failed States, or that are ravaged by complex emergencies.49

The consequences of State failure on public health emergencies are important. Failed States become reservoirs for diseases that can spread internationally, yet they are unable to cope with disease outbreaks because they lack a working health system that can appropriately sustain public health functions, prevent disease outbreaks, participate in disease eradication programs, and create conditions to reduce disease transmission and promote health for all. Further, diseases spread more easily as a result of a reduced effort and ability to control them. Dr. Brundtland took Ebola as an example and suggested that:

So far it has been contained because it has been confined to small villages far from big cities. Health systems like that of Uganda have done a fine job in isolating patients and restricting spread. They could do this with the help of international specialists from WHO and [the Centers for Disease Control in] Atlanta because the security situation in the area was good. What if an outbreak takes place in a devastated Central African country where there is no local health care? What if the security situation was so bad that we could not send in international experts to advise and assist in containing the outbreak? What if infected people start fleeing into cities, to neighboring countries, and eventually out of the region?50

It is indeed the risks that Dr. Bruntland envisages that need to be addressed. What can be done if an international health emergency occurs in a State that is incapable of controlling or dealing with it?

Health emergencies in failed States are problematic not only for the particular States and their populations. They also present risks and challenges for the entire international community, which needs to be able to actively and effectively address global emergencies. It is therefore particularly important to assess the mechanisms that already exist and that can be usefully employed in response. At the same time, it is important to identify possible lacunae that need to be filled to face possible emergencies.

49. See Brundtland, supra note 13, at 4.
50. Id. at 5.
Few strategies exist to support the health systems of failed and failing States, both at the international and national levels. Internationally, several international organizations have been mandated to address specific aspects of international health emergencies. Among these, WHO plays the main role in addressing public health emergencies. The role of WHO and of the international community in addressing public health emergencies is analyzed and appraised in the remaining sections of this Article. First, the Article addresses the role of WHO, and specifically two WHO mechanisms that address health emergencies in failed and failing States: IHR 2005 and GOARN. Next, the Article explores mechanisms that other international organizations, such as UNICEF and OCHA, adopt to provide support in global health emergencies.

IV. The Role of WHO in Addressing Global Health Emergencies

WHO, the principle international organization dealing with global health, was created on April 7, 1948, and soon thereafter became the specialized UN agency for health issues. WHO has 194 Member States and thus enjoys virtual universal membership. The WHO Constitution provides no mechanisms of withdrawal and no expulsion mechanisms against Member States that do not behave according to its Constitution. The main governing body of WHO is the World Health Assembly, composed of delegates representing Member States. Additionally, the governing structure of WHO also includes a 34-member Executive Board elected by the World Health Assembly for a period of three years, a Secretariat headed by a Director-General, and ad hoc committees established by the Executive Board following a proposal by the World Health Assembly or the Director-General.

51. These include WHO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. Nationally, several donor countries include funding for health emergencies in their emergency and humanitarian programs, which are mostly channeled through international organizations, like WHO, UNICEF, and other UN agencies. See Paeslee, supra note 24.
54. Burci & Vignes, supra note 52.
On a global scale, WHO plans and coordinates health actions on a global basis. At the request of members, it assists them in planning and carrying out health programs, strengthening their health services and training health workers. It promotes medical research and exchange of scientific information [and] makes health regulations for international travel, keeps communicable disease under constant surveillance, collects and disseminates data on health matters and sets standards for the quality control of drugs, vaccines, and other substances affecting health. It gives health assistance to members in emergencies or natural disasters.  

WHO's stated objective is “the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health,” defined in the preamble of its Constitution as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.” Its role in global health emergencies is therefore fundamental. In fact, health is a dynamic concept and an “intrinsically complex and multi-faced topic, which straddles many areas of human activity and which has undergone a deep technical and philosophical evolution during the last few decades.”

To reach its objective, WHO has both normative and directing powers. WHO can, inter alia, act as a coordinator and coordinating authority on international health work. Upon request, it assists governments in strengthening health services, and it facilitates the UN's provision of health services and assistance to special groups, such as the peoples of trust territories. Further, WHO can stimulate and advance work to eradicate epidemics, endemics, and other diseases; provide information, counsel, and assistance in the field of health; standardize

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56. Peaslee, supra note 52, at 450.
58. Id.
59. BURGI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 108. Health is also interlinked to many other basic issues, which are at the center of the international agenda, including economic and social development, human rights, children and women's rights, environment and food policies.
60. "Normative powers" refer to the power to approve, through the World Health Assembly, specific regulations that are mandatory for Member States. By contrast, WHO’s “directing powers” encompass policy directives that suggest, but do not require, that Member States undertake a certain course of action. See id.
61. WHO Constitution, supra note 57, at art. 2(e).
diagnostic procedures; and generally take all necessary action to attain its objective.\(^{62}\)

WHO Member States have explicitly recognized the link between health and global security. In 2001, the World Health Assembly approved an important resolution on Global Health Security, which recognized that "any upsurge in cases of infectious disease in a given country is potentially of concern for the international community."\(^{63}\) The resolution highlights a three-part strategy to address "global health security": (1) the development of specific programs for the prevention and control of known epidemic threats, such as influenza, meningitis,
or cholera; (2) the detection of and response to health emergencies that result from unexpected circumstances or unknown causes; and (3) improved preparedness through the strengthening of national infrastructures for disease surveillance and response.⁶⁴

Additionally, the resolution specifically requested that the Director-General provide technical support to all Member States to develop intervention programs aimed at preventing epidemics and responding to the threats and emergencies of communicable disease, in particular with regard to epidemiological investigations, laboratory diagnoses, and the management of cases by the community and clinics. The resolution also requested that the Director-General make appropriate arrangements to develop plans for regional preparedness and response. Finally, the resolution urged that the Director-General provide support to Member States to strengthen their capacity to rapidly detect and respond to threats and emergencies related to communicable diseases, especially by "developing the laboratory skills needed for diagnosis and providing training in epidemiological methods for use in the field, particularly in the most exposed countries."⁶⁵

Although under the WHO Constitution, Assembly resolutions are generally not binding legal instruments, the World Health Assembly determines the policies of the organization, and resolutions have a directive function.⁶⁶ Moreover, the strategy envisaged by the resolution is applicable in all health emergency situations and seems to be suited to deal with some situations arising from State failure.

The implementation of the resolution relies on WHO's Epidemic and Pandemic Global Alert and Response Operations (GAR), which is the main operational tool to address global health security.⁶⁷ GAR mainly operates through two important and interlinked instruments: the 2005 International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) and the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN).⁶⁸ The following

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64. VIGNES & BURCI, supra note 52, at 141.
66. WHO Constitution, supra note 57, at art. 18.
sub-sections evaluate the functioning, successes, and challenges of these key public health emergency tools.

A. The 2005 International Health Regulations Framework

IHR 2005 is a key instrument for WHO’s strategy to address global health security. It can also be an effective tool to assist States, including failing States, in addressing health emergencies and preventing the international spread of infectious diseases. IHR 2005 built on the original IHR and must therefore be placed in its historical context to be properly understood.69

1. The Original International Health Regulations

In a rare use of its Article 21 normative powers,70 the World Health Assembly initially adopted the International Sanitary Regulations—the predecessor to IHR—by resolution on May 25, 1951.71 The regulations provided unique powers to WHO to act on specific infectious diseases in all Member States. Article 21 of the WHO Constitution gives the World Health Assembly unique normative powers to regulate international disease control.72 Through Article 21, the Assembly can adopt regulations concerning five specific areas, including “sanitary and quarantine requirements and other procedures designed to prevent

69. Historically, international coordinated actions to control the spread of certain infections predated the creation of WHO. In fact, when WHO was established, it inherited the responsibility of controlling the international spread of diseases from a series of international agreements and conventions dating back from the first International Sanitary Conference in Paris in 1851. Between then and the end of the century, eight conventions on the spread of infectious diseases across national boundaries were negotiated, and multilateral institutions were established to enforce these conventions, including the precursor to the present Pan American Health Organization. BURCI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 134-35; see also Peaslee, supra note 52, at 409-51.

70. Article 21 has only been used twice. It was used the first time to adopt the ‘Regulations Regarding Nomenclature’ No. 1, on 22 May 1967. These Regulations deal with the harmonization of statistical classifications of morbidity and mortality by Members States following WHO recommendation for purpose of easier comparability. See Resolutions Regarding Nomenclature, 20th World Health Assembly (May 22, 1967), http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/docs/en/NOMREGS.pdf.


72. Article 19 of the WHO Constitution also enumerates normative powers of the Health Assembly, which may adopt conventions or agreements in matter for which the organization is competent, such as the recently adopted Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, available at http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/en/. See WHO Constitution, supra note 57, at art. 19.
the international spread of disease." 73 Regulations are adopted by a simple majority within the Assembly 74 and "come into force for all members after due notice has been given of their adoption by the Health Assembly except for such members as may notify the Director-General of rejection or reservations within the period stated in the notice." 75 Thus, all Member States are bound by the regulations once adopted, provided they have not expressly announced a reservation to them.

Since its creation in 1948, WHO consolidated the diverse conventions relating to public health, and at its Fourth Health Assembly in 1951, adopted the International Sanitary Regulations, which constituted the "only international health agreement on communicable diseases that is binding on Member States." 76 The regulations declared that they replaced, between the parties, all earlier conventions and agreements. 77 Their objective was "to ensure the maximum security against the international spread of diseases with a minimum interference with world traffic." 78 At first, they only covered the so-called "quarantinable diseases." 79 The regulations were revised several times since 1948, mostly as a result of improved knowledge on epidemic

73. The other areas are: (b) nomenclatures with respect to diseases, causes of death and public health practices; (c) standards with respect to diagnostic procedures for international use; (d) standards with respect to the safety, purity and potency of biological, pharmaceutical and similar products moving in international commerce; (e) advertising and labeling of biological, pharmaceutical and similar products moving in international commerce. Id. at art. 21.

74. Article 60 of the WHO Constitution states: "(a) decision of the Health Assembly on important questions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting. These questions shall include: the adoption of conventions or agreements; the approval of agreements bringing the Organization into relations with the United Nations and inter-governmental organizations and agencies in accordance with Articles 69, 70 and 72 [all relating to Relations with other Organizations]; amendments to this Constitution. (b) Decisions on other questions, including the determination of additional categories of questions to be decided by a two-thirds majority, shall be made by a majority of the members present and voting. (c) Voting on analogous matters in the Board and in committees of the Organization shall be made in accordance with paragraphs (a) and (b) of this article." Id. at art. 60.

75. Id. at art. 22.


78. Id.

79. The quarantinable diseases were: plague, cholera, yellow fever, smallpox, louse-borne typhus, and louse-borne relapsing fever. Id.
diseases.\textsuperscript{80} In 1969, the regulations were also renamed to the presently known IHR.\textsuperscript{81}

Originally, IHR was a unique mechanism to control the international spread of certain human diseases.\textsuperscript{82} It was an international legal instrument that was legally binding on all WHO Member States who had not rejected them or made specific reservations, as well as on all non-Member States that had agreed to be bound by them. Because WHO enjoys quasi-universal membership, IHR was widely applicable. IHR required Member States to notify WHO about any single case of plague or yellow fever occurring in humans in their territories.\textsuperscript{83} In this context, IHR provided a powerful tool to the World Health Assembly to control the spread of certain epidemics.

However, IHR mechanisms never truly developed the full potential of their legally binding status and did not prove to be effective in controlling the global spread of disease.\textsuperscript{84} First, Member States were reluctant to notify outbreaks of diseases subject to IHR.\textsuperscript{85} Certain Member States feared disproportionate reactions from other WHO Member States and their consequences on trade and tourism.\textsuperscript{86} Others were reluctant because of internal political reasons also linked to a perceived dishonor in experiencing disease outbreaks.\textsuperscript{87} Finally, some Member States simply lacked the necessary surveillance systems required to recognize and report outbreaks under IHR. Second, IHR did not contain any enforcement provisions to ensure compliance.\textsuperscript{88} There are no available sanctions for failure to comply with binding regula-

\textsuperscript{80} For example, special provisional provisions relating to the Mecca pilgrimage were repealed in 1956. See BURCI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 135. Also, for example, louse-borne typhus and louse-borne relapsing fever were removed from the scope of the list in 1969 because they were not considered to be a risk anymore. Following its eradication, smallpox was also removed from the regulation in 1981. WHO, INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS, supra note 77, at 5 (citing Thirty-Fourth World Health Assembly Res. WHA34.13 (May 20, 1981)).

\textsuperscript{81} Id. (citing Twenty-Second World Health Assembly, Res. WHA22.46 (July 25, 1969)).


\textsuperscript{83} WHO, INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS, supra note 77 (“WHO Member States are obliged to notify WHO for a single case of cholera, plague or yellow fever, occurring in humans in their territories, and give further notification when an area is free from infection.”).

\textsuperscript{84} See D.P. Fidler, International Law and Infectious Diseases 133 (1999); see also Burci & Vignes, supra note 52, at 137-39.

\textsuperscript{85} BURCI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 129-35.

\textsuperscript{86} Id.

\textsuperscript{87} Id.

\textsuperscript{88} See Fidler, supra note 3, at 134 (adapted from D. P. Fidler, International Law and Infectious Diseases 58-71 (1999)).
tions approved under Article 21 of the WHO Constitution. Similarly, there is no enforcement provision within IHR beyond a dispute resolution mechanism for questions concerning its interpretation or application.89 Third, some of IHR’s measures proved ineffective in preventing the spread of diseases. In 1968, even the WHO Deputy Director-General himself observed that “the International Sanitary Regulations had failed to contain the international spread of cholera and smallpox—two of the diseases then subject to those regulations.”90 Fourth, in some cases, Member States overreacted to certain diseases by adopting excessive disease-control measures that were either prohibited by the regulations or not justified under the epidemiological circumstances of the time.91 For example, in the wake of the AIDS pandemic, some Member States imposed restrictive measures to travelers, such as requiring them to carry certain health documents.92 This violates IHR regulations, but given the lack of enforcement provisions, WHO could take no action against these Member States. Fifth, IHR’s scope was limited to controlling three diseases: yellow fever, cholera, and plague.93 Member States have been reluctant to include new diseases on the list. In fact, while several diseases were removed from the list of the regulations, no new disease has ever been included.94 Historically, this choice was linked to the fact that these diseases are more likely to substantially affect international trade.95 Moreover, this choice could also be explained by the fact that IHR was first approved in 1948—and as indicated above, it has older historical roots—when little was known about other diseases that are now significant, and when the movement of people, goods, and pathogens was not as rapid as it is today. Thus, despite its great potential, IHR failed to provide a general effective mechanism to assist the international community in addressing global health emergencies and controlling the spread of disease.

89. WHO, International Health Regulations, supra note 77, at 5.
90. Fidler, supra note 3, at 133 (reported in D. P. Fidler, International Law and Infectious Diseases 58-71 (1999)).
91. BURCI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 137-39 (for example, these measures included travel restrictions).
92. Id. at 138. Fidler also reports as an example of unnecessary health measures taken under IHR, the EU ban on Fish Exports from Countries in East Africa during a cholera outbreak. See FIDLER, supra note 3, at 136-39.
93. See supra notes 86, 93.
94. For example, louse-borne typhus and louse-borne relapsing fever were removed from the scope of the list in 1969 and following its eradication, smallpox was removed from the regulation in 1981. Reg. WHA34.13 (May 20, 1981).
95. BURCI & VIGNES, supra note 52, at 137-39.
The 2001 SARS epidemic highlighted weaknesses in the IHR system and reinforced the need to revamp IHR by, among other things, focusing its provisions on general descriptions of diseases, rather than on lists of named diseases.\textsuperscript{96} In a resolution relating to the revision of IHR and adopted during the SARS emergency, the World Health Assembly urged the Director-General:

To take into account reports from sources other than official notification, to validate these reports [on infectious diseases] according to established epidemiological principles;

To alert, when necessary and after informing the government concerned, the international community to the presence of a public health threat that may constitute a serious threat to neighboring countries or to international health on the basis of criteria and procedures jointly developed with Member States.

To collaborate with national authorities in assessing the severity of the threat and the adequacy of control measures and, when necessary, in conducting on-the-spot studies by a WHO team with the purpose of ensuring that appropriate control measures are being employed.\textsuperscript{97}

This recommendation was pivotal, as it recognized the importance of collaborating with non-State actors and the need to assess the adequacy of control measures implemented by national authorities.

2. The 2005 International Health Regulations

Recognizing IHR's limitations, the World Health Assembly requested a revision of the regulations in 1995 by adopting the Resolution on the Revision and Updating of the International Health Regula-
The resolution aimed at reflecting the significant changes in disease patterns brought about by the emergence and re-emergence of disease, the advancement of medical science, and the changes in communications technology and shipping methods for goods and cargoes since the adoption of the previous version of the IHR in 1969. 99

Over the next decade, several WHO technical committees and the Committee on International Surveillance of Communicable Diseases worked on the development of a new set of IHR, which were initially adopted in 2005. 100 In June 2007, eighteen months after the notification of its adoption, IHR 2005 became legally binding on all WHO Member States, except for those Member States that have rejected them or have submitted reservations. 101 If the World Health Assembly determines that the reservation is compatible with the object and purpose of IHR 2005, and it has not been objected to by at least one-third of the other Member States within six months of its notification, the regulations enter into force for the reserving Member State, subject to the reservation. 102 Non-Member States of WHO may also notify the WHO Director-General that they agree to be bound by the regulations. 103

States Parties were required to meet the requirements set forth in IHR 2005 as soon as possible, and no later than five years after the regulations' entry into force. 104 The implementation phase was divided into two parts. The first two years, until June 2009, focused on the assessment of existing national structures and resources and a development of national plans of action. 105 The following three years, until June 2012, focused on the implementation of the plans of action.

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98. Revision and Updating of the International Health Regulations, Forty-Eighth World Health Assembly, Res. WHA48.7 (May 12, 1995).
102. Id. at art. 62.
103. Id. at art. 59.
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specifically regarding national surveillance and response systems. During this period, States Parties were also required to implement the required actions at designated airports, ports, and certain ground crossings. In special circumstances, a two-year extension could be obtained, which would be followed by an additional two-year extension in extraordinary situations.

The purpose and scope of the regulations, stated in Article 2, are "to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade." IHR 2005 represents a significant step forward in WHO's ability to control and prevent health emergencies of an international nature by requiring countries to report certain disease outbreaks and public health events to WHO, and defining the rights and obligations of Member States to report public health events. It also establishes a number of procedures that WHO must follow in its work to support global public health security.

Importantly, the definition of public health emergency contained in Article 1 is more comprehensive than the one contained in the original IHR. It is identified as "an extraordinary public health event" determined by two concomitant elements. Such an emergency must "constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease" and "potentially require a coordinated international response." This new definition of a public health emergency is of paramount significance. In fact, it addresses one of the main problems of the original IHR—i.e., its closed-list character—and it extends the application of IHR 2005 to a wide range of diseases, including those that are presently unknown. This definition covers all existing, new, and re-emerging diseases, including emergencies caused by non-

106. Id.
107. Id.
111. IHR 2005, supra note 101, at art. 1.
infectious disease agents. As such, it significantly enlarges the applicability of IHR, and thus overcomes one of the most important limitations of the original IHR, which was previously applicable only to three determined diseases.

Moreover, the definition relies on two issues that have a large potential impact on the efficient coordination of responses in failed or failing States. First, a “public health emergency” must pose a risk to other States. Thus, the cross-boundary character of present-day health emergencies has become a central feature of IHR 2005. IHR 2005 is only applicable if the disease has the potential to spread internationally and poses a risk to other States. Second, the new definition also recognizes that a health emergency requires an international coordinated response. This is further recognition that, increasingly, States cannot cope by themselves in health emergencies and need to coordinate a response together.

Furthermore, to analyze the relevance of an event as an international public health risk, a series of factors must be considered. These include geographical setting, time, size of the outbreak, closeness to an international border or airport, speed of spreading, and mode of transmission. Article 12 provides the criteria by which the Director-General of WHO may, in consultation with the State Party concerned, determine the existence of a health emergency of international concern.\textsuperscript{112}

Annex 2 of the regulations provides States with an important decision instrument (a “decision tree” or algorithm) to assess events occurring in their territory.\textsuperscript{113} The “decision tree” contains four criteria: the seriousness of the public health impact of the event; the unusual or unexpected nature of the event; the risk of spread internationally; and/or the risk that restrictions to international travel or trade may result because of the event.\textsuperscript{114} The occurrence of certain diseases, such as SARS, polio, and yellow fever, needs to be reported directly.\textsuperscript{115} However, when other unspecified and unknown diseases are found, the decision instrument is used.\textsuperscript{116}

Once the conclusion is reached that the event qualifies as an

\textsuperscript{112} Id. at art. 12.


\textsuperscript{114} Id.

\textsuperscript{115} Id.

\textsuperscript{116} Id.
international public health risk, the State must notify WHO. On the basis of the information received, the Director-General of WHO determines whether the event constitutes a public health emergency of international concern. If the State Party in whose territory the event is taking place is in agreement with the determination, the Director-General can then seek the views of a special Emergency Committee for appropriate temporary recommendations. If the State Party does not agree within 48 hours, the Emergency Committee hears the views of the State Party and makes recommendations to the Director-General, who is responsible for the final decision. Thus, in addition to providing mechanisms that bolster WHO's ability to control and prevent international health emergencies, the new framework is also a significant step forward in terms of applying legally binding measures to international situations that qualify as health emergencies and that can become a public risk.

The new regulations require all States to notify WHO of any event that may constitute a public health emergency of international concern within twenty-four hours of the event. Importantly, States must respond to WHO's requests for verification of information regarding health emergency events so that appropriate technical collaboration in such emergencies can be ensured and, if necessary, other States can be informed of the public health risks which may require their attention.

Further, each State is required to establish national IHR focal points to ensure continuous contact with WHO, which must be known to all States. In the event of a health emergency, States must respond to public health risks that might spread internationally. States must also provide the public health rationale and scientific justification for any additional measures that significantly interfere with international traffic.

WHO Member States have also agreed to provide routine inspection and control activities at international airports, ports, and some ground

117. Id.
118. IHR 2005, supra note 101, at art. 12.
119. Id. at arts. 12, 48.
120. Id. at arts. 12, 49.
121. Id. at art. 6.
122. Id. at art. 10.
123. Id. at art. 4.
124. Id. at art. 15.
125. Id. at art. 43.
crossings, to prevent international disease transmission. 126 States are, furthermore, bound to develop, strengthen, and maintain the capacity to detect and report health emergencies, as defined by IHR 2005. 127

Fundamentally, the new regulations enhance WHO's role in global health emergencies. In the event of an emergency, WHO itself may recommend measures to be adopted by States affected by a public health emergency of international concern, other States, and operators of international transport. 128 WHO can also assist all Member States in assessing and controlling outbreaks, thus increasing the credibility of each Member State's response. 129

WHO may make temporary recommendations on an ad hoc, time-limited, risk-specific basis. 130 WHO can also produce standing recommendations, which indicate the appropriate measures to be applied for specific ongoing public health risks at certain international airports, ports, and ground crossings for routine or periodic application. These can be directed at persons, baggage, cargo, containers, ships, aircraft, road vehicles, goods, or postal parcels. 131

The effectiveness of IHR 2005 was put to the test during the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic, the first Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). H1N1 is a novel strain of influenza A virus, which first emerged in Mexico in March 2009. 132 The virus quickly spread to 46 countries and caused more than 90 deaths. 133 The Director-General of WHO determined that the H1N1 outbreak constituted a PHEIC on April 25, 2009, as provided by IHR 2005. 134 The Director-General convened an Emergency Committee and consulted the affected States. 135 The Emergency Committee was tasked with proposing the issuance, modification, extension, or termination of

126. Id. at arts. 19, 20, Annex 1.
127. Id. at art. 13.
128. Id. at arts. 12, 15.
129. Id. at art. 12.
130. Id. at art. 15.
131. Id. at art. 16.
135. Katz, supra note 133.
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measures to mitigate the consequences of the PHEIC. The Emergency Committee met frequently and continuously shared information with national IHR focal points and Member States, which by and large followed WHO's recommendations. A Review Committee was established to review the implementation of the new IHR 2005 in the H1N1 crises. It concluded that IHR 2005 advanced the protection of global health and helped the world to better prepare for public health emergencies, and that WHO generally performed well during the pandemic. The Committee concluded, however, that the world was still "ill-prepared to respond to a severe influenza pandemic or to any similarly global, sustained and threatening public-health emergency." Importantly, the Committee concluded that "the most important structural shortcoming of the IHR is the lack of enforceable sanctions" because there are no legal consequences if a country fails to act or does not explain why it adopted measures that were different from those recommended by WHO.

IHR 2005 undoubtedly represents a major step forward in controlling the global spread of disease. The double-pronged definition of international health emergency is important: it can encompass all international threats and is based on the risk that it may cause to other States. It is also important that one of the definition's requirements is that the outbreak potentially necessitates a coordinated international response. This highlights the importance of a common reaction. Moreover, States must nominate focal points and must respond to WHO's requests for information on possible health emergencies. The Director-General's power to issue temporary recommendations is similarly very important and novel.

However, as with any international agreement, IHR 2005 represents a consensus among WHO Member States of a balance between their sovereign rights and a shared commitment to prevent the international spread of disease. The compromise between these conflicting interests permeates the regulations. First, similar to IHR, IHR 2005 does not

136. Id.
137. Id.
139. Id.
140. Id.
141. Id.
include any enforcement mechanism that may be used against a State that fails to comply with IHR 2005 provisions. Although there are soft mechanisms that may stimulate compliance, there are no mandatory tools to ensure compliance with the regulations.\textsuperscript{142} Second, IHR 2005 contains no provisions that allow WHO to act upon an emergency in the absence of State action. Thus, only State Members that already have a working health system will be able to participate fully within the IHR 2005 system. The establishment of national focal points may be relevant, especially coupled with a State’s obligation to respond to WHO requests for verification of information regarding health emergency events. However, the absence of enforcement mechanisms undermines the stringency of the rule. Third, IHR 2005 is still only focused on monitoring, rather than intervening in, health situations, and WHO can only issue recommendations for the adoption of measures by the State Party experiencing the public health emergency of international concern or by other States Parties.\textsuperscript{143}

Despite these limitations, IHR 2005 also includes three interesting new tools that may be of particular use to failed and failing States. First, in making its assessment of health emergencies, WHO can take into account reports other than notifications or consultations.\textsuperscript{144} Such reports are likely to include reports of organizations that are active on the ground, and could probably be useful. Second, before taking action based on such reports, WHO needs to consult and attempt to obtain verification from the State Party concern.\textsuperscript{145} During the verification stage, WHO can offer to collaborate with the State Party concerned in assessing the emergency.\textsuperscript{146} If the State Party does not accept the offer of collaboration, WHO may, if the magnitude of the emergency justifies it, share the information with other States Parties, thus

\textsuperscript{142} Indeed, compliance mechanisms are based on “peer pressure.” The WHO notes: “although the IHR (2005) do not include an enforcement mechanism per se for States which fails to comply with its provisions, the potential consequences of non-compliance are themselves a powerful compliance tool. Perhaps the best incentives for compliance are “peer pressure” and public knowledge. With today’s electronic media nothing can be hidden for very long. States do not want to be isolated. The consequences of non-compliance may include a tarnished international image increased morbidity/mortality of affected populations, unilateral travel and trade restriction, economic and social disruption and public outrage.” Frequently Asked Questions About the International Health Regulations (2005), WORLD HEALTH ORG. 3, available at http://www.who.int/ihr/about/FAQ2009.pdf.

\textsuperscript{143} IHR (2005), supra note 101, at art. 15.

\textsuperscript{144} Id. at art. 9.

\textsuperscript{145} Id.

\textsuperscript{146} Id. at art. 10.
allowing them to react.\textsuperscript{147} Third, and finally, it is for the Director-General to determine the existence of a global health emergency.\textsuperscript{148} The Director-General can also issue temporary recommendations to be implemented by other States also, not only by the State that experiences the emergency.\textsuperscript{149}

Generally, however, the applicability of the IHR 2005 framework in failed or failing States is likely to be limited. It will depend substantially on how IHR 2005 is implemented and the role that the Director-General will take. In fact, as seen above, Article 15 of IHR 2005 gives the Director-General the power to issue temporary recommendations to act on health emergencies, even in the absence of State approval. Whether and how the Director-General will implement this provision will be of key importance to successfully managing health emergencies in failed and failing States. The remaining issue, however, is that the notification of health emergencies must still originate from Member States.\textsuperscript{150}

B. The Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

The second instrument created by WHO to deal with global outbreaks of disease is GOARN.\textsuperscript{151} GOARN is the product of technical collaboration between 110 institutions and networks,\textsuperscript{152} known as technical partners, that combine human and technical resources with the goal of rapid identification, confirmation, and response to outbreaks of international importance.\textsuperscript{153} GOARN creates an operational framework that links those with relevant expertise and skills for the purpose of keeping the international community alert of any threat of

\textsuperscript{147} Id.
\textsuperscript{148} Id. at art. 12.
\textsuperscript{149} Id. at art. 15.
\textsuperscript{150} Id. at Annex I.
\textsuperscript{152} Member institutions include WHO and UNICEF, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; as well as several NGOs, such as Médecins Sans Frontières and the International Rescue Committee, as well as scientific institutions in Member States, regional networks and laboratories. For more information on members, see \textit{Global Outbreak Alert & Response Network}, WORLD HEALTH ORG., \url{http://www.who.int/csr/outbreaknetwork/en/} (last visited July 17, 2013).
\textsuperscript{153} Id.
outbreaks in order to be prepared to respond.\textsuperscript{154} GOARN is a more comprehensive and flexible instrument than the IHR; moreover, it can be applied in conjunction with IHR, as it covers the three original IHR diseases and operates under the new IHR 2005 regime. Furthermore, GOARN complements IHR 2005 by facilitating coordination of global health emergency responses on the ground.

GOARN was derived from WHO’s non-binding directing and coordinating powers.\textsuperscript{155} GOARN was implemented pursuant to the Global Health Security resolution, in which the World Health Assembly expressed its support for the “collaboration between WHO and all potential technical partners in the area of epidemic alert and response, including relevant public sectors, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.”\textsuperscript{156} GOARN also directs the Director-General to provide technical support to all Member States for the development of intervention programs to prevent and strengthen their capacities in responding to threats and emergencies from epidemics and communicable diseases.\textsuperscript{157} This resolution is fundamental in the effort to control the spread of diseases. First, it recognizes the importance of collaboration with technical partners, including NGOs. Second, it mandates the Director-General to strengthen WHO’s assistance to Member States in matters of epidemic prevention and control. Toward these ends, WHO provides the secretarial service for GOARN, which is guided by a Steering Committee. WHO also coordinates international outbreak response through the use of resources from within the network.

\textsuperscript{154} Id.

\textsuperscript{155} Generally, WHO has preferred to set norms or standards by non-binding recommendations which entails a duty of members to report on any action taken.” 

\textsuperscript{156} WHO Constitution, supra note 57, at art. 2. Article 23 and 62 of the WHO Constitution further give the World Health Assembly the power to issue recommendations and gives Member States the duty to report on their actions with respect to the recommendations. Id. at arts. 23, 62. Article 23 reads: “The Health Assembly shall have authority to make recommendations to Members with respect to any matter within the competence of the Organization.” Id. at art. 23. Article 62 monitors the implementation of the recommendations. Id. at art. 62. It states: “Each Member shall report annually on the action taken with respect to recommendations made to it by the Organization and with respect to conventions, agreements and regulations.” Id.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Id.} ¶ 3(4).
1. Key Features of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network

One of GOARN's goals is the development of standards for international epidemic response. Through these standards, GOARN strives to combat the international spread of disease outbreaks, including all of the diseases included in the GAR strategy and the three IHR diseases;\(^{158}\) to ensure that affected States receive appropriate technical assistance rapidly; and to contribute to long-term epidemic preparedness and capacity building. GOARN has agreed on several operational protocols that standardize epidemiological, laboratory, clinical management, research, communications, logistics support, security, evacuation, and communications systems.\(^{159}\) Additionally, GOARN has developed a set of Guiding Principles for International Outbreak Alert and Response, aimed at "improv[ing] the delivery of international assistance in support of local efforts by partners in the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, and seek[ing] to promote the highest standards of professional performance in the field."\(^{160}\)

The Guiding Principles for International Outbreak Alert and Response provide detailed standard operating protocols on how to respond to and evaluate outbreaks of disease of international importance, coordinate field activities, and secure international support.\(^{161}\) They provide that WHO should ensure that outbreaks of potential international importance are rapidly verified and information is quickly shared within the Network. An Operational Support Team should then coordinate a rapid response to the requests for assistance from States affected by the outbreak.\(^{162}\) Next, the most appropriate experts should reach the field in the least possible time to carry out coordinated and effective outbreak control activities.\(^{163}\) This international team is expected to integrate and coordinate activities to support national efforts.

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\(^{158}\) The diseases included in the GAR strategy are: anthrax, Avian influenza, Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever, dengue/dengue haemorrhagic fever, Ebola haemorrhagic fever, hepatitis, influenza, Lassa fever, Marburg haemorrhagic fever, meningococcal disease, plague, Rift Valley fever, SARS, smallpox, tularaemia and yellow fever. See supra note 67.


\(^{161}\) Id.

\(^{162}\) Id.

\(^{163}\) Id.
and existing public health infrastructure. The principles also recognize the unique role of national and international NGOs in the area of health, including in the control of outbreaks. Finally, the principles recognize that the GOARN responses will proceed with full respect for ethical standards, human rights, national and local laws, cultural sensitivities, and traditions. These principles are general, but they have been implemented to address disease breakouts in a number of countries, including several failed States. GOARN has lent its support to the delivery of international assistance and to local efforts in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kosovo, Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

A key feature of GOARN is the Global Alert and Response Team (GART), which is in charge of assessing the epidemiological significance of any reported outbreak and deciding whether any action is needed. The team is made up of members from WHO Country Offices, WHO sub-regional Response Teams, WHO Regional Offices, the Alert and Response Operations Centre team in Geneva, and disease specialists. Every day, in Geneva, GART deals with reports of possible outbreaks and reports of unknown diseases. Once verified, the reports of disease outbreaks are reported in widely accessible publications.

GART developed six criteria to assess the seriousness of the reports for global health: first, whether the disease is unknown; second, the potential for its spread beyond national borders; third, the seriousness of the health impact or of unexpectedly high rates of illness or death; fourth, the potential for interference with international travel or trade;

164. Id.
165. Id.
166. Id.
169. Id.
170. These publications include the WHO Outbreak Verification List (OVL), a weekly publication targeted to public health professionals with information on verified or under-verification diseases outbreaks of international public health importance so that timely actions can be taken; the Disease Outbreak News, which provides public information about officially confirmed outbreaks of international importance; and the Weekly Epidemiological Record, which covers epidemiological information on cases and outbreaks of diseases under the IHR and also on other communicable diseases of public health importance. See Information Management and Dissemination, WORLD HEALTH ORG., http://www.who.int/csr/alertresponse/infomanagement/en/print.html (last visited July 17, 2013).
fifth, the strength of national capacity to contain the outbreak; and, sixth, whether the disease is a suspected accidental or deliberate release. 171

The second and last criteria are especially relevant in situations of health emergencies in failing States. The fact that the seriousness of a report is assessed based on its potential of spreading beyond national borders clearly emphasizes GOARN’s focus on global, rather than localized, emergencies. Similarly, the assessment of the strength of national capacity to contain the outbreak signals that WHO anticipates the possibility that the State will be incapable of handling the outbreak and is willing to intervene. Once the seriousness of an outbreak is confirmed, WHO provides targeted technical advice and supplies to the affected States.

2. GOARN’s Effectiveness in Global Health Emergencies

Through GOARN, WHO can coordinate investigations and responses to global health emergencies. 172 The SARS outbreak provided an important testing ground for the efficacy of WHO’s capabilities. First, the initial unofficial reports of an unknown disease in China were received and verified through GOARN. 173 Second, GOARN proved to be a readily available instrument to control the epidemics, and the effort to control the epidemics was coordinated in part through GOARN. 174 Its role in successfully dealing with the epidemics was recognized by the health community: in May 2003, the World Health Assembly approved a resolution on SARS, requesting the Director-General “to strengthen the function of WHO’s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network.” 175 Moreover, in another resolution approved in the same session, the Assembly requested that the Director-General, in the revision process of IHR, take into account reports from sources other than official notifications and to collaborate with national authorities to assess the adequacy of their control measures. 176 Importantly, these resolutions demonstrate the Assembly’s support of GOARN’s activities and methodologies.

172. Id.
174. Id.
175. Revision of the International Health Regulations, supra note 97, ¶ 2.
176. Id.
In 2012, GOARN reported eighty-four alerts. For example, in October 2012, GOARN reported an outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The alert reported forty-nine cases of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, of which twenty-four were fatal. The report details that

> [t]he Ministry of Health . . . continues to work with partners, under the National Task Force to identify all possible chains of transmission of the illness and ensure that appropriate measures are taken to interrupt transmission and stop the outbreak. The task force includes [Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, US Agency for International Development, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the United Nations Children’s Fund and WHO].

The report confirmed that samples were tested by the Uganda Virus Research Institute and that the CDC had established a field laboratory in Isiro, where the cases were reported, in the beginning of the outbreak. The Public Health Agency of Canada also provided support on rapid diagnosis in the field with their mobile laboratory facilities.

On the same day, a report was also issued providing updates on the outbreak of cholera in Sierra Leone that had affected twelve of its thirteen districts since the beginning of 2012. The update noted that:

> With support from national and international partners and donors, including [UNICEF, Oxfam, British Red Cross, Save the Children, Care, Concern, Médecins Sans Frontières, UK Department of International Development, OCHA, International Rescue Committee, and WHO], the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has scaled up the response particularly in the

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179. Id.

180. Id.
areas of coordination of the overall response, surveillance and case management.\footnote{181}

The two cases exemplify the different options available to GOARN members to confirm and react to a disease outbreak. They also confirm the international efforts surrounding attempts to isolate the spread of highly contagious communicable diseases.

Interestingly, GOARN’s activities also play a role in the implementation of IHR 2005. For example, at the beginning of May 2008, China reported the outbreak of hand, foot, and mouth disease due to enterovirus 71 in Fuyang City.\footnote{182} The outbreak resulted in several thousands of cases, of which about twenty were fatal.\footnote{183} On May 21, 2008, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in collaboration with the WHO Representative Office in China, released a preliminary report on the outbreak, which stated that “[a]s part of the efforts to implement [IHR 2005,] China will further strengthen the early warning system by immediate notification of clustering of clinically abnormal and severe cases, as well as [the] increasing international collaboration and information exchange”\footnote{184} made available via GOARN.

GOARN has also shown its viability in failed States, where support from the State is completely lacking. For example, it has dealt with several outbreaks arising out of Somalia, although the security situation raised concerns during its operations. In January 2007, WHO reported that there were 114 suspected cases, including fifty-one deaths, of Rift Valley Fever in Somalia.\footnote{185} Several actors were involved in the process of detection, confirmation, and containment: one case was confirmed by laboratory analysis in the Kenyan Institute of Medical Research and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) International Emerging Infec-
tious Program in Kenya. Médecins sans Frontières facilitated the transport of samples, and the WHO country office held training sessions with Somali medical officers on how to detect and contain the disease. However, it was reported that the deteriorating security situation hampered control measures in the affected area.

In 2002, Somalia's Ministry of Health reported an outbreak of meningitis, later confirmed by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference and Research on Meningococci at the National Institute of Public Health in Oslo. As a result of the outbreak, a crisis committee was set up by the Ministry of Health, the Somali Red Crescent Society, Médecins sans Frontières, UNICEF, and WHO. The committee strengthened surveillance and prepared a mass vaccination campaign. The campaigns vaccinated 67,681 people in the first few weeks.

Again, on May 2, 2000, WHO reported 2,232 confirmed cases of cholera in certain regions of Somalia. WHO carried out cholera control coordination activities through the cholera task force, whose membership includes UNICEF, Action Contre la Faim Internationale, the International Medical Corps, Médecins sans Frontières, the Coordinating Committee of the Organization for Voluntary Services, and the Somali Red Crescent Society.

These examples demonstrate that GOARN is often able to provide effective assistance in cases of disease outbreak and to control the spread of disease. Although it is based on a voluntary mechanism, GOARN is effective in reporting, managing, and to a certain extent, controlling the spread of disease even in failed States, where health systems are dysfunctional or nonexistent. Moreover, the fact that reports are assessed on the basis of a national health system's capability

187. Id.
190. Id.
193. Id.
to contain outbreaks ensures that proper action is taken in situations of State failure. However, as highlighted above, deteriorating security situations also play a role in the ability to control the spread of diseases in failed States.

GOARN is a flexible system based on collaboration between national and international health care professionals. The assistance provided by GOARN depends upon the threat that the disease outbreak poses to the international community and to international travel and trade, the knowledge of the specific disease, the seriousness of the health impact, and the viability of the affected national health system. If a State is capable of controlling and reporting disease outbreaks, it will do so. Otherwise, WHO’s personnel in the field or other health care professionals may also report the outbreak. WHO can also coordinate the response, if possible, with the competent health ministry. WHO and GOARN may take a larger role insofar as the national authorities do not possess the required expertise and capacity to control the outbreak. This “elastic” solution seems to be particularly fitting for failed States.

Nonetheless, GOARN has some important limitations. The main drawback is that it is based on a voluntary system of coordination and is not a legally binding instrument. This means that it does not contain enforcing measures. Thus, for example, GOARN was powerless during the SARS epidemic until China let the inspection team into its territory.

One can argue, however, that GOARN has been effective in many circumstances precisely because it is based on a loose relationship between different actors, which are not competing against each other. GOARN’s strength is based on the fact that its membership is varied, and includes governmental and non-governmental actors and international organizations. Moreover, GOARN’s members primarily include health professionals, not politicians or negotiators. As such, it does not threaten to hurt sovereignty sensibilities.

V. OTHER INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES IN SITUATIONS OF HUMANITARIAN CRISSES

In addition to the WHO instruments, humanitarian programs provide another broad and general mechanism to support the health systems of failed and failing States. Failed and failing States are often also conflict countries or countries with severe humanitarian needs.

The international community, and particularly the UN, has created important mechanisms of intervention in such situations. Specifically, OCHA and UNICEF are particularly active in health emergencies.

In situations of humanitarian crisis, OCHA, a special office of the UN Secretariat, coordinates all operations by UN agencies that provide health and protective services, food, shelter and other on-the-ground humanitarian assistance in fifty countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. These coordinated interventions have become a fundamental mechanism for delivering health care in failed and failing States, as they provide targeted support to populations in need. Equally, they are a mechanism by which the international community can ensure that certain health standards are maintained.

UNICEF is also active in health emergencies in crisis situations, with several projects on the ground. UNICEF is mandated to ensure the protection of children, and has also created a special program for its activities in “Countries in Crises.” The program is specifically targeted toward countries in emergencies that are undergoing a particular critical period. UNICEF’s stated goal is to reach the most vulnerable in humanitarian crises, where access to vulnerable populations is often delayed because of inaccessibility, armed combat, or weather conditions. To do so, UNICEF identified five organizational priorities: girls’ education, early childhood, immunization, the fight against HIV/AIDS, and protection from violence, abuse, exploitation, and

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197. UNICEF affirmed that and noted that “the consequences (of such emergencies) are usually devastating, leaving entire communities deprived of the most basic assistance and protection. Most of those who die in wartime, for instance, do not die as a direct result of violence but from the loss of basic health services, food, safe water or adequate sanitation. This is especially true for children. The countries with the highest rates of preventable deaths among children are countries which have experienced protracted periods of armed conflict: India, Nigeria, China, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Ethiopia.” Id.
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discrimination.\textsuperscript{198} UNICEF's activities in emergency situations vary. For example, in October 2012, UNICEF announced the expansion of its operations within Syria and in the countries affected by the Syrian crisis to assist with growing needs.\textsuperscript{199} UNICEF estimated that there are one million children affected by the conflict inside Syria, and that so far, more than one hundred thousand Syrian children have been displaced to other countries in the region, including Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq.\textsuperscript{200}

Although humanitarian programs cannot provide all of the services of an effective health system, they are important interventions by the international community in crisis countries. These efforts provide preliminary and targeted support to national health systems. They are critical in guaranteeing a minimum standard of health to populations living in situations of State failure. They also provide an opportunity for the international community to monitor the situation of certain health indicators and, if necessary, provide the necessary means to counter possible crises and threats.

VI. CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

Global public health emergencies have become a major concern and an important part of the security policies of many States. This Article examined the instruments available to the international community to control the spread of infectious diseases and health emergencies, focusing on failed and failing States, which are particularly ill-equipped to combat the spread of disease because their health systems are typically non-functioning.

WHO primarily carries out its role as the main actor in the international arena dealing with health emergencies through IHR 2005 and GOARN. This Article has assessed advantages and limitations of each of


\textsuperscript{200} UNICEF, Syria's Children, supra note 199.
these two instruments. IHR 2005 is an important binding legal instrument, but the lack of an enforcement mechanism threatens to undermine its strength in the absence of State cooperation. GOARN represents a new model of global governance: it is a non-binding collection and verification instrument that involves the collaboration of field personnel from international organizations and NGOs, and has become an effective and powerful mechanism to address global health emergencies. Despite their shortcomings, these instruments have proven to be effective in some situations.

The fundamental question that remains to be addressed is what the international community can do in the absence of State cooperation or capacity to perform. Uniquely, under the new IHR 2005, WHO’s Director-General can issue temporary recommendations to respond to a trans-boundary health emergency, even in the absence of Member State agreement. However, IHR 2005 assumes that Member States have the core capacity to report and notify health emergencies through a national focal point. The extent to which GOARN can provide information about health emergencies to the Director-General is key to guaranteeing a coordinated and prompt action in the absence of State control. Used symbiotically, IHR 2005 and GOARN can ensure a coordinated response to health emergencies in failed and failing States. It is key to continue to monitor the situation and to provide WHO with the appropriate tools and support. As always, the devil is in the details.