



Ref.: C.L.40.2020



The World Health Organization (WHO) presents its compliments to Member States and has the honour to refer to the vital role played by laws in health systems. Well-designed laws can help build strong health systems; evaluate and approve safe and effective drugs and vaccines; and enforce actions to create healthier and safer public spaces and workplaces. Critically, they are key to effective implementation of the WHO International Health Regulations (2005): surveillance; infection prevention and control; management of travel and trade; and implementation of measures to maintain essential health services.

Well-designed laws are essential to the response to COVID-19 and following Member States' request for support in this area, WHO has engaged with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law at Georgetown University to create the COVID-19 Law Lab (www.COVIDLawLab.org) which gathers and shares legal documents related to COVID-19 from over 190 countries across the world.

The COVID-19 Law Lab aims at helping Member States establish and implement strong legal frameworks to manage the pandemic, enabling them to learn from other similar countries. The COVID-19 Law Lab provides a centralized and easy access to laws related to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving very fast, and so are the legislative actions taken by Member States. To ensure the COVID-19 Law Lab reflects those latest changes and remains a relevant tool, Member States' collaboration is required. Therefore, in accordance with article 63 of the WHO Constitution, Member States are requested to communicate by email all health laws taken in the context of COVID-19 to the WHO Secretariat by 31 October 2020 at clarked@who.int in order to be included in the COVID-19 Law Lab.

In this context health laws are considered at a large sense (e.g. law, decree, act) and include decisions taken by parliaments (statutory laws) and governmental authorities (regulatory and administrative laws). The COVID-19 Law Lab is currently focusing on the following topics: state of emergency declarations, quarantine measures, disease surveillance, legal measures relating to mask-wearing, social distancing, and access to medication and vaccines. WHO invites Member States to also communicate laws pertaining to other topics but deemed relevant to the COVID-19.

The World Health Organization takes this opportunity to renew to Member States the assurance of its highest consideration.

GENEVA, 21 September 2020

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