

Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)

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Public Health Emergency of International Concern Latest News

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently declared the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

About Public Health Emergency of International Concern

- It is an **emergency declaration** formally announced by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in response to a **crisis of international proportions** that can **affect people's health**.
- It is the **WHO's highest level of global health alert**.
- Such a declaration may require **immediate action at a global level against the international spread** of disease.
- A PHEIC is **subject to the International Health Regulations (IHR)**, which require those states involved to promptly respond to the crisis at hand.

- PHEICs are **decided upon by a governing body** of international experts known as the **IHR Emergency Committee**, a group formed in the aftermath of the 2002–2004 SARS outbreak.
- The declaration is **reviewed on a tri-monthly basis** and renewed as needed.
- However, **certain disease** outbreaks can be **declared a PHEIC without the approval of the IHR**.
- Alongside infectious disease, a **PHEIC can also be declared** in response to outbreaks of **public health hazards** such as **chemical agents or radioactive materials**.

Key Facts about International Health Regulations

- The IHR was **adopted by the Health Assembly (decision-making body of WHO) in 1969** in an effort to **prevent the spread of disease across national borders**.
- Following the chaotic global outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) that lasted between 2002 and 2004, revisions were made to the IHR to account for such global emergencies.
- A **new IHR** was adopted at the **58th World Health Assembly in May 2005**.
- The IHR 2005 was an **international agreement among 196 countries** committed to upholding global health security.
- **WHO** was deemed the **coordinating body** of this agreement.

Source: **UN**

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