24 May 2018 – GENEVA – The World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank Group today launched a new mechanism to strengthen global health security through stringent independent monitoring and regular reporting of preparedness to tackle outbreaks, pandemics, and other emergencies with health consequences.

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and World Bank Group President Dr Jim Yong Kim co-led the creation of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, launched today on the margins of the 71st Session of the World Health Assembly.

The Board will be co-chaired by Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former WHO Director-General, and Mr Elhadj As Sy, Secretary General of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It will include political leaders, heads of UN agencies and world-class health experts, serving in their individual, independent capacities.

“The ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a stark reminder that outbreaks can happen anywhere, at any time,” said Dr Tedros.

“Part of being prepared is having a means of assessing progress made at all levels, by all actors, identifying gaps, including in financing, and making sure all actors are working together, pulling in the same direction. I’m proud of the work we’ve done together with the World Bank Group to establish the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, and delighted that it will be led by such exceptional global health leaders,” he added.

“For too long, we have allowed a cycle of panic and neglect when it comes to pandemics: we ramp up efforts when there’s a serious threat, then quickly forget about them when the threat subsides,” Dr. Kim said. “With the GPMB, we’re taking a large step towards breaking that cycle. The GPMB will help save lives, prevent economic damage, and ensure that we keep pandemic preparedness at the top of the global agenda.”

“Pandemic preparedness must be as much local as global, and we must meaningfully engage local communities in preparedness, detection, response and recovery to disease outbreaks. I warmly welcome the launch of this Global Preparedness Monitoring Board, and commit to partner with you all. We all need to be accountable to each other on the promises we make, and the results we achieve,” said Mr Sy.

Board co-chair Dr Brundtland added: “With the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo reminding all of us of the West African outbreak of 2014-15, the importance of being prepared for and resilient to health crises has never been clearer. Though the last two years of progress in improving capacity to respond to such events is encouraging, gaps remain – and it is time to stop talking about them, and start addressing them. It is in view of this that I welcome the establishment of the new Global Preparedness Monitoring Board and

am pleased to be co-chairing it. The Board will monitor preparedness activities on a global scale, and will hold all actors, from private and public sectors, accountable for building essential public health capacities, generating sustainable financing and ensuring that necessary research and development is conducted."

The Board will monitor emergency preparedness across national governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector. It will report annually on adequacy of financing, progress on relevant research and development, and the strength of health crisis preparedness at the global, regional and national levels.

Building on that report, the Board will advocate at the highest levels for health crisis preparedness. It will ensure that all stakeholders, at all levels and across all sectors, keep these issues on the political agenda and are held accountable for making the world better prepared to respond to outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences.

The UN Secretary-General's Global Health Crises Task Force, created in 2016 in response to the West Africa Ebola outbreak, recommended in its mid-2017 final report to the UN General Assembly the need for robust ongoing monitoring of global health emergency preparedness. In response, WHO and the World Bank worked together to establish the new monitoring board. The Board's Secretariat will be housed at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.