

# Protecting Health in Earthquakes

Strengthening health sector emergency  
management for earthquakes

**Istanbul Outcome Statement**

2 July 2026



World Health  
Organization

European Region



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

The Protecting Health in Earthquakes Ministerial Conference on advancing health security through earthquake emergency management convened ministers, heads of delegations and partners from across the WHO European, Eastern Mediterranean, Western Pacific and African Regions at a time of increasing recognition of the profound health impacts of disasters resulting from natural hazards.

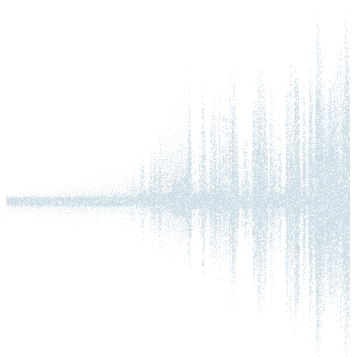


The conference was guided by the lessons learned from the devastating earthquakes that struck southern parts of the Republic of Türkiye and the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic on 6 February 2023. This catastrophic event resulted in significant loss of life and an unprecedented surge in health-care demands – including urgent trauma care and critical health support – necessitated by mass displacement and the widespread disruption of essential services. The successful response in the Republic of Türkiye highlighted the importance of a dual approach to national health security: prioritizing the development of strong, resilient national health systems equipped to implement risk reduction measures and effectively manage health emergencies, while ensuring they are firmly backed by international solidarity and collaboration.

Convening in Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye, in 2026, participants recognized that earthquake risks continue to affect many countries, territories and areas across WHO regions, often in contexts already facing humanitarian, social, economic, environmental and geopolitical pressures.

This outcome statement summarizes key points highlighted during the conference, building on existing frameworks, instruments and guidance, including the International Health Regulations (2005), as applicable, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Sustainable Development Goals and relevant World Health Assembly resolutions, including, as appropriate, resolution WHA77.8 on strengthening health emergency preparedness for disasters resulting from natural hazards. It also supports the implementation of the Second European Programme of Work 2026–2030.

**We, the participants of the Protecting Health in Earthquakes Ministerial Conference, note the importance of the principles of solidarity, equity, preparedness and international cooperation that underpin global health security and emergency management.**



## We recognize that national health sector earthquake preparedness and response systems can be further strengthened to become more resilient, coordinated, inclusive and sustainable, through:

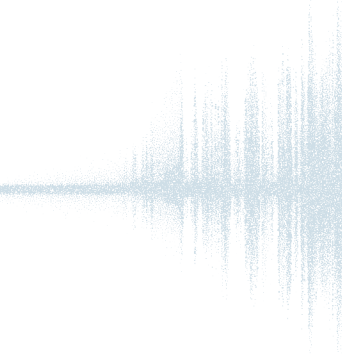
- strengthening systematic, evidence-based and regularly conducted cross-sectoral all-hazard risk assessments to guide earthquake risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery efforts;
- embedding health emergency preparedness and response within broader strategies for disaster risk reduction, mitigation and health system resilience-building that advance progress toward universal health coverage and are anchored in primary health care;
- strengthening operational readiness, incident management systems and cross-border coordination mechanisms to facilitate coordinated international assistance and help ensure timely, safe, accessible and effective health emergency response during earthquakes;
- developing, reviewing and strengthening, as appropriate, relevant legislation and plans to strengthen the capacity of national emergency medical, trauma and rehabilitation systems to manage acute conditions, particularly during the critical initial period (the first 72 hours) following an earthquake;
- promoting digital health solutions – including telehealth infrastructure – for early warning and notification, to be included into preparedness, response, rehabilitation and recovery efforts, with appropriate safeguards for data protection, privacy, cybersecurity, equity of access and ethical use of health data, to strengthen multisectoral coordination;
- helping ensure that health sector preparedness and response plans, including surge capacity and contingency financing arrangements, are regularly updated, exercised and informed by technical standards and best practices, while remaining gender-responsive and disability-inclusive, as appropriate, including business continuity plans to enable the rapid restoration of health information systems during emergencies;
- promoting multisectoral collaboration and the alignment of terminology and procedures across health, urban planning, environmental protection, water and sanitation, civil protection and other relevant sectors;
- promoting investment in resilient and safe health infrastructure, including primary health care, hospitals and other essential health services, ensuring both crisis response and the continuity of essential health services during and after earthquakes, with the prioritization of structural, functional and operational resilience;
- promoting well-being through preventive health programmes and health promotion;
- strengthening local, national and regional Emergency Medical Teams and Public Health Response Teams, where applicable, and supporting the development, rapid mobilization, protection, mental well-being and psychosocial support of a coordinated and interoperable national emergency surge health workforce;
- promoting disaster medicine education and training, including regular multisectoral simulation exercise programmes for health-care professionals;

- enhancing preparedness and continuity planning for water, sanitation and hygiene services, food safety and other essential public services necessary for health-care delivery and infection prevention;
- strengthening risk communication, community engagement and approaches to counter misinformation and disinformation, while empowering communities to build local resilience and preparedness;
- promoting equitable access to essential medical products, and strengthening arrangements for strategic stockpiles during emergencies; and
- strengthening data collection, interoperable disaggregated data systems, research networks, operational learning and research to improve evidence-informed preparedness, response and recovery.



**We consider international collaboration, solidarity, inclusivity and community engagement to be essential to strengthening resilience and reducing the health impacts of earthquakes, and therefore recognize that:**

- communities need to be meaningfully engaged in preparedness, response and recovery efforts in collaboration with health authorities;
- the needs of populations in vulnerable situations and groups facing heightened risk should be reflected and prioritized in emergency preparedness planning and service delivery;
- the protection of health-care workers should be incorporated into national preparedness and response plans, as they can also be disaster victims and may experience physical and psychological burnout, and should therefore be adequately protected, trained and supported before, during and after emergencies;
- countries should continue to strengthen regional and interregional cooperation mechanisms, information-sharing and voluntary mutual assistance arrangements, as appropriate;
- interoperability and coordinated deployment of international emergency response capacities should be strengthened, including through multinational surge capacity arrangements that enable rapid assistance during large-scale disasters;
- risk communication before and during emergencies should be transparent, timely, coordinated and grounded in both evidence and community insights;
- local leadership and locally led action need to be recognized as important to effective risk reduction, emergency preparedness, response and recovery; and
- preparedness and resilience-building should be recognized as long-term investments in health security, sustainable development and societal well-being.

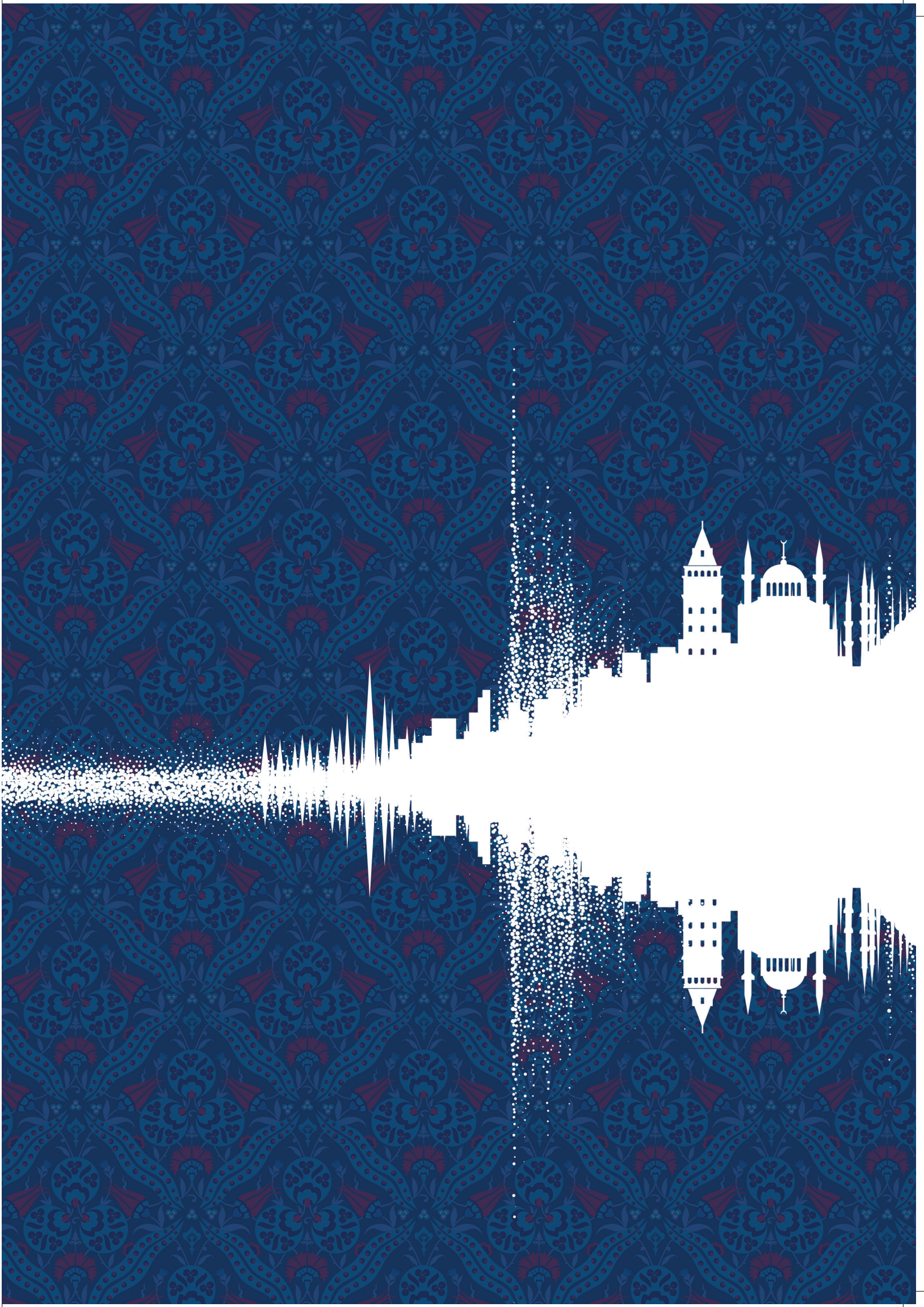


We call for and support continued action by Member States, WHO, partners and relevant stakeholders within their respective mandates, available resources, and applicable rules and procedures to strengthen health sector capacities for risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and earthquake response and recovery. This includes strengthening collaboration across regions and sectors, supporting country-led implementation of existing frameworks and applicable obligations, and promoting sustained investment in resilient and people-centred health systems.

**WHO Regional Director for Europe**  
Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge

**His Excellency Minister**  
Prof Dr Kemal Memiřođlu

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