

Statement to agenda item 2 of the WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY SECOND SPECIAL SESSION (29 November–1 December 2021)

Rehabilitation is a key health strategy that comprises interventions that optimize functioning in individuals with health conditions, in interaction with their environment. Rehabilitation has demonstrated its relevance also for people affected by COVID-19 during the acute and sub-acute phases, as well as for post COVID-19 condition.

Indeed, rehabilitation shortens the duration of hospitalization, relieves pressure on acute care and facilitates long-term recovery.

In addition, health services disruption during the pandemic has led to reduced capacity or complete unavailability of rehabilitation services, affecting the functioning of more than 2 billion individuals.

Regardless the type of international instrument on pandemic preparedness and response that Member States may opt for, we - **International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM)**, **World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)**, **World Confederation for Physical Therapy, International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO)**, **International Spinal Cord Society (ISCoS)**, and **Handicap International Federation (HI)**, supported by **Global Rehabilitation Alliance (GRA)**, want to stress that:

1. **Pandemic preparedness and response** will not be effective unless robust efforts and investments are made to strengthen health systems, including the rehabilitation sector.
2. **Rehabilitation** should be integrated in health planning in relation to pandemic preparedness and response, considering both the rehabilitation needs of people affected by pandemics and the other groups requiring access to rehabilitation.
3. **Guidelines** for service provision and capacity building of rehabilitation professionals should be developed to advance integration of quality and affordable rehabilitation at all levels of health systems, including into post-COVID-19 care.
4. **Telerehabilitation** is a critical modality to allow continuity of care for patients who can benefit from remote consultations, while improving access for persons in vulnerable situations.

