Efforts to strengthen health security and health systems need to be integrated to promote sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness of a country’s preparedness efforts, while avoiding the creation of a vertical health security silo. Strong comprehensive health systems are essential for health security while in turn better health security strengthens health systems. Integrated, multi-stakeholder, multi-sectorial approaches are beneficial in that they work to strengthen global health security and national capacities by involving key players to help prepare for prevention, detection and response to public health emergencies. Such approaches help to build strong resilient health systems based on quality universal health coverage for equitable health outcomes and wellbeing. Indeed, local health security based on essential public health functions forms the bedrock for global health security.

Stronger health security within health systems relies upon several underpinning components such as the quality and safety aspects of service delivery; infection prevention and control; community engagement; health workforce; health information systems; supply chain management; and adapted infrastructure. WHO has three priority principles in guiding its work towards health security – health systems integration: first, the integration of health security functions into the mainstream national health system policies, strategies and plans; second, the strengthening of specific priority health system components and service delivery aspects essential for health security function; and third, addressing short and long-term country needs in strengthening IPC programmes with emphasis on preparedness to potential new outbreaks. In order to practically implement these principles into health security and health systems strengthening integration, WHO is working on four areas of work:

**Work stream 1:** *Health systems inputs into the “Strategic partnership portal” (SPP).* Mapping domestic funding and donor support for health security work, the SPP helps to identify gaps and avoid duplications. The health system dimension enhances understanding on how health security and health system strengthening projects support different components.

**Work stream 2:** *Health systems strengthening underpinnings of health security – supporting preparedness in countries.* The focus is on country missions (Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Togo and Uganda) to assess existing national policies, strategies and operational documents with a view to strengthening health systems underpinnings of health security. The emphasis is on priority health system components and service delivery aspects essential for health security function. Operational recommendations are then presented to country authorities.

**Work stream 3:** *Recommendations for integrating health system and health security.* This work will build on the findings of the different country missions under work
stream 2. This will be done in consultation with different stakeholders upon completion of the country missions.

**Work stream 4: Infection prevention and control (IPC) preparedness and longer-term capacity building.** This work stream provides country support in strengthening IPC programmes to be better prepared for outbreaks while strengthening IPC strategies and actions within national plans.

**Key findings from the first country missions**

1. Health security and health system structures are functioning as disconnected vertical silos within ministries of health, WHO offices as well as development partners.

2. Ministries of health, WHO offices and development partners express strong interest and support for integrating different “health security” strategies within wider efforts at national health system strengthening.

3. Ministries of health, WHO offices and development partners agree with the proposed two pronged approach for integrating “health security” strategies:
   - By integrating the national “health security” strategies into the National Health Policies, National Health Strategic Plans (NHSP), National Health Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks, Essential Package of Health Services. This should be done at the moment of the development of the new NHSPs and related documents or at the moment of the Midterm Review.
   - Assessing specific health service delivery and health system aspects essential to health security and propose operational recommendations to strengthen them.

4. At present, most National Health Policies, National Health Strategic Plans, National Health Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks, Essential Package of Health Services do not, or only rudimentary, address health security aspects.

5. Countries need support to develop “operational” partner coordination mechanisms for capacity building.

6. Need to develop of a set of 5-10 high-level security indicators (see Global reference list of 100 core health indicators) as basis for the selection of country specific health security indicators for integration in National Health Sector Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks.

7. Different countries have specific approaches or entry points for engaging stakeholders on the integration work.
   - Malawi: partner coordination by quality department MOH
   - Burkina Faso: Mid-term review of the NHSP
   - DRC: Finalization and validation of different health security/preparedness/emergency response plans is an essential first step before integration into national policy documents.

8. Infection prevention and control is key in service delivery and requires strengthening in all country missions to date.