**FSX18 Opening Remarks Guidance Note**

**Introduction**

The opening remarks for the exercise should ideally be written by the senior staff member who will deliver them. The speech should be written for the audience, and possibly used as part of a press statement.

Make sure senior staff are fully briefed on the exercise activities (purpose, specific objectives, methodology and expected outcomes), so that they are confident to speak about the exercise and answer any questions the press might ask.

**1. Key points of the opening remarks**

* Introduction and welcome to VIPs and all key stakeholders, participants and others
* Country context: history of emergencies; recall recent disasters/emergencies and key lessons that highlight the need to be prepared and to build capacity through simulation exercises
* Outline the relationships between WHO, the host government and relevant partners
* Praise partners for their participation; highlight the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination in all responses
* Emphasise the importance of emergency response preparedness to save lives and ensure efficient, effective and appropriate responses to emergencies
* Thank the donor and mention the wider project of which this activity is a part
* Highlight the range of activities in which WHO is engaging with the host government to support the ministry of health and strengthen domestic ability to prepare for and respond to health risk and emergencies
* Request that all participants engage with the exercise to test the country’s plans and response systems
* Request that during the debrief, all participants recognise the strengths and weaknesses exposed by the exercise, and focus on identifying lessons and recommendations to strengthen the system, so that the response system can later deliver when it counts.

*Suggested content:*

* 1. ***Examples of opening remarks for a field/full-scale exercise***
  + *Firstly, WHO would like to commend the Ministry of Health, the XXX Health Service and the other ministries, departments and agencies involved for the great progress that has been made in emergency preparedness.*
  + *Add local context.*
  + *In addition, a national Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan has been developed and the Ministry of Health has established an Emergency Operations Centre to coordinate the response to a public health emergency.*
  + *A great deal has been achieved in terms of emergency preparedness, but the only true way to know if a country is ready is to test the systems – and put plans into practice.*
  + *We are all very thankful that XXX has not yet recorded any confirmed cases of XXX and we hope it remains this way. In the absence of a real case, a simulation such as the one that will take place tomorrow is the best opportunity to exercise our response coordination systems.*
  + *In many ways, a simulation is better than a real event, because it allows the opportunity to test systems in a safe environment. It allows us to find out if something doesn’t work as well as we had hoped at a time when no lives are on the line, and presents the opportunity to improve our plans and systems.*
  + *WHO is very pleased to see this simulation is taking place at this time, and I encourage you all to embrace this opportunity for us to trial and learn together. At the debrief meeting on Thursday, I look forward to seeing the ideas and opportunities for improvement that you generate through participation in this simulation.*
  + *Finally, I would like to conclude by thanking the DG for his/her leadership and participation in the exercise, and all of you for investing your time, now, to ensure we are all better prepared for the future.*