The January 12 earthquake that struck Haiti caused widespread devastation, tragic loss of life, untold suffering inside and outside the capital, Port-au-Prince. The disaster has left no one unaffected in this impoverished country.

We have seen in the city they are afraid of a new earthquake, so they are fleeing all over the country - not only in Port-au-Prince, the entire country will suffer. It is such a severe earthquake that the first medical care is for fractures. We need lots of orthopedic surgeons, and lots of drugs. All these people are not going to be operated on within days, might take days, or weeks, before all these Haitians will be operated on.

Those that responded normally, civil society, international organizations, and Haitian government were overwhelmed by the scale of devastation. Tragically, many were victims themselves. The disaster has destroyed and damaged many hospitals and clinics, depriving many of healthcare when they need it most. This underscores the need for health facilities to be resilient during disasters.

This major disaster requires an exceptional response. We are mobilizing all countries and regional offices, to meet the overwhelming challenges of bringing humanitarian assistance to Haiti, one of the most poverty-stricken countries in the world.

Injuries. Wound infections. Access to water and food. Delivering emergency obstetric and maternal care to women are among critical health needs today. Continuing disease treatments are vital for people suffering from chronic conditions, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS or diabetes. WHO has mobilized medicines to treat 1000s, and sent dozens of specialists in different fields, including mass casualty management, coordination, logistics, proper handling of dead bodies, water, sanitation and communication.

The response also has to be strong...Problem is when you have such an extraordinary response in such a small location, creates chaos.

The greatest challenge for WHO today is to lead an effective, tightly coordinated health response among all health partners on the ground and around the world. Scaling up operational capacity is essential to WHO and health plus departments to deliver care required to those affected by this tragedy.

The global health cluster has identified 5 urgent actions: Coordinating the health sector response, and conducting needs assessment, preventing and controlling disease outbreaks, providing safe water for health facilities and monitoring water quality, ensuring availability and essential drugs and supplies, and restoring basic healthcare services. In the longer term, we will need to help ensure continuity of primary healthcare
services, and support local healthcare recovery.

We are coordinating an extraordinary health response with donor countries, NGOs and UN. Done correctly, this will help Haiti save lives today, and create a stronger health system for the future.