

## Assembly notes on "What is a Pandemic?"

Intro – The new coronavirus is all but certain to be declared a pandemic very soon. Should this have happened earlier? What difference will this make?

Slide two – What is this picture about?

- It shows the World Health Organisation's (WHO) live "situation report" on the spread of Covid-19.
- The map is continually updated with the latest number of confirmed outbreaks across the world.
- When this image was captured on Sunday, the worst-affected countries were China (79,968 cases), South Korea (3,736 cases), and Italy (1,128 cases).

Slide three – What is the difference between an 'epidemic' and a 'pandemic'?

- According to the WHO, an epidemic is a regional outbreak of an illness that spreads unexpectedly.
- In 2010, the WHO defined a pandemic as "the worldwide spread of a new disease" that affects large numbers of people.
- So the key difference is how global an illness is. Though Covid-19 is now in many countries, the vast concentration is still in China.

Slide four – Some key facts about pandemics.

Slide five – What is this infographic about?

- This shows the deadliest pandemics in history.
- The bigger the circles, the larger the number of deaths. You can see how smallpox, measles, Spanish flu, and the Black Death have been the biggest killers.
- Compared to these, Covid-19 would be a tiny dot.

Slide six – What exactly is a pandemic? How does it spread? And what can we do about it? This 2012 TED-Ed video by author Mark Honigsbaum remains as true today as when it was first delivered.

Slide seven – Does it matter whether the new virus is called a pandemic or not?

- The experts say that it has already been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), which legally allows the WHO to make recommendations on how member countries should handle an epidemic.

Slide eight – The head of the WHO is very concerned not to spread fear and panic without any good reason. But he has been fiercely criticised for acting slowly and failing to see how serious the virus would become.