

23.1 Statement by the representative of the WHO staff associations

Thank you chair,

We would like to thank the representative of the WHO staff association for his clear statement, which raises critical issues that we all can relate to and that are evident also in other organisations.

We want to use this opportunity to thank the staff of WHO.

Director General,

We have been working with your staff, at all levels of the organisation, on a variety of topics. We are always amazed by their professionalism, dedication and passion. We have seen your staff on our zoom screens almost on a daily basis over the last two years, over meetings, briefings and webinars. We also read your reports and publications, and know how much work goes beyond the scenes to produce all of these materials. We also acknowledge not only the work done here in Geneva, but also the work being done on the ground world-wide.

WHO's work during COVID-19 has been critical for health systems everywhere. We want to recognize this, and hope you all can see the contribution you have made to this global effort.

With that, we recognize the negative toll that staff are experiencing and the influence the pandemic has had on their Mental Health. Extra pressure of working during a pandemic, long hours of working from home, together with greater uncertainty, can lead to staff distress. We share the staff's concerns raised in their statement on Mental Health and urge the WHO to consider their suggestions. Now, more than ever, duty of care must focus on the mental, psychological, and emotional well-being of staff.

On the issue of returning to work from the office, while we understand the necessity of the hour, we also understand that Covid 19 is here to stay and our new reality obligates us to find creative solutions and remain flexible. Thus, we urge management to take necessary steps to return gradually to office work.

Thank you.