European Union
Statement

WHO
72\textsuperscript{nd} World Health Assembly
(20-28 May 2019)

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Agenda item – Health, environment and Climate change

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Geneva, 22 May 2019

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
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EU Statement

Honourable Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries North Macedonia*, Montenegro *, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova as well as Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The EU and its Member States welcome the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change and the Global Plan of Action on Climate Change and Health in Small Island Developing States.

A positive perspective is that improving people’s health and the health of our planet leads to many opportunities and co-benefits. At the same time, climate change, environmental degradation, pollution and ill-health are closely interrelated.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
It is essential to ensure that the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change is fully embedded in the 2030 Agenda. To achieve the SDGs we need to work across agendas, promote intersectoral actions that are mutually reinforcing and that support co-benefits for the goals and targets aiming at more healthy societies. To do this, the WHO needs to ensure its contribution is a more integrated, ONE-UN-approach in which all relevant UN organizations work closely together, with other stakeholders, at the global, regional and national level. Ensuring complementarity of action with other UN organisations in environment and health actions, and tackling pollution is essential and should be explicitly reflected in the WHO strategy.

Prevention, including through enhanced education and awareness, an enabling environment, together with the effective application of circular economy principles and of a One-Health approach are paramount to protecting health and the environment.

Chair,

The cost of inaction is huge. Building the awareness, capacity and resilience of society and health systems to address current and emerging climate-related health risks will save lives and money - now and in the future. As stated in the strategy, new approaches are needed that consider the consequences of actions in their entirety, taking into account a longer-term and equity perspective. Furthermore, tackling climate change is a great opportunity for health improvement, as we move towards choosing healthier options. Sustainable food systems are one important area where we can have major positive impacts on human health and our environment.
The recent evaluation of the EU strategy on adaptation to climate change emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral cooperation and building awareness and capacity of health systems to address climate-related health risks. Working beyond the health sector - a Health-in-All Policies approach - is thus essential.

The EU commends the DG’s strong commitment for Health, Environment and Climate Change. We would appreciate a report on the outcome and follow-up since the First High-Level Conference on Air Pollution and Health which brought global attention to the enormous impacts of air pollution on people’s health.

We congratulate the Secretariat on its work on WHO Environmental noise guidelines for the European Union, launched in 2018. At least 100 million people in the EU are affected by road traffic noise, and in Western Europe alone at least 1.6 million healthy years of life are lost as a result.

We also congratulate the Secretariat on its work on the WHO Chemicals Roadmap facilitated by a new Global Network on Chemicals and Health. We trust that Member countries will note the large contribution that this Roadmap and health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) can make towards achieving WHO’s strategic priority of saving 3.8 million lives, by promoting healthier populations through healthier environments, and trust this will mean that they set aside adequate resources for the strategy’s chemicals safety goal.

Finally, we encourage WHO to put health high on the agenda for the Climate Action Summit in New York in September. Safe, sustainable and environmentally
sound energy and food systems are not only priorities for the climate agenda but also for people’s health.

Thank you.