European Union
Statement

WHO
72nd World Health Assembly
(20-28 May 2019)

Agenda item – Agenda item: 18.1 WHO reform processes, including the transformation agenda, and implementation of UN development system reform

Geneva, 24 May 2019

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
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EU Statement

Honourable Chair,
Distinguished Director-General,
Colleagues,

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

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

We understand and expect that the new transformation agenda aims at improving the Organisation’s ability to implement its core functions, aligning better with the targets of the health-related SDGs, GPW13 and its triple billion goals, as well as putting more focus on where WHO can provide best added value and how all the three levels of WHO cooperate to deliver better results at a country level. We welcome the approach taken to harmonise activities across the whole Organisation,

* Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
to work more horizontally in order to break the silos, to increase accountability and to strengthen the production of global goods.

During the last months, we have witnessed a big change in the structure and management of the Organization, including the launch of the new operating model for WHO. We congratulate the new members of the management for their appointment and express our thanks for their work done so far. However, we need more clarity on how the presented changes will contribute to the aforementioned goals before giving our support to them.

While acknowledging the goal to eliminate duplication and inefficiencies in areas of overlapping roles and work, we would like to hear more details about the rationale behind building the structure of WHO on the current four pillars. In particular, we notice that Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases have been brought under one pillar, whereas a separate pillar has been created for AMR, and it is not clear which topics are included under the pillar of Healthier Populations. Furthermore, it is not clear how a number of topics, among others maternal health, public health, human rights, polio transition, are addressed.

We would also like to have more information about the four cross-cutting, corporate divisions that intend to support and enable WHO’s programme and emergency work. In particular, we welcome the establishment of the division of the Chief Scientist and the intention to strengthen WHO’s normative role. Complementing its technical excellence, WHO has to base its normative work solidly on science and epidemiology to strengthen the credibility of the organisation. We are also pleased to see that one of the tasks of the new division will be to address the digital agenda and health innovations. However, we would like to see more information on how this position can reinforce the political
messages WHO wants to deliver and what are the budgetary implications of its creation.

We still have not seen the final version of the organigram that could give us a clearer picture of the responsibilities within the WHO, as would also do the detailed job descriptions of the newly appointed ADG-s. Transparency and clear communication is crucial for effective cooperation between Secretariat and Member States. In this context we expect a solution facilitating the Permanent Missions an easy contact with the relevant experts at HQ, for example through a protected website.

The EU and its Member States acknowledge that the transformation is an ongoing process and further refinements shall occur. We support the aim of WHO to move from a cycle of repeated reform to a programme of continuous improvement. We understand that the overall goal is to have the new operating model functional for the biennium 2020–2021, with all major transformation initiatives finished by the end of 2019. In this regard, we call for full transparency in implementing any further changes with participation of Member States and the WHO staff.

Furthermore, we would like to have more information about the WHO Values Charter, which aims at assisting the work on transformation and helping to drive cultural change across WHO. We understand that the aim of this Charter is the protection, empowerment and strengthening of WHO staff, the most valuable resource this Organization has.

Finally, we welcome the approach to deepen partnerships, including strengthening NSA involvement. However, it should come hand in hand with a proper risk management policy. We would like to see an evaluation of the outcome of the first
Partners Forum in Stockholm and more information on the intended WHO Foundation and control mechanisms envisioned for it.

Thank you.