European Union
Statement

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

Agenda item 3 – Address by DG Dr. Tedros

“Universal health coverage: leaving no-one behind”

Geneva, 20 May 2019

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –
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EU Statement

Honourable President of the Assembly,
Distinguished Federal Councillor,
Distinguished Director-General and Deputy Director General,
Excellencies, 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 and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, we extend our deepest condolences for the tragic loss of Dr Richard Mouzoko, WHO epidemiologist, in the context of the Ebola response in the Democratic Republic of Congo in April. At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the increasing reports of attacks against health workers, which we

* Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
strongly condemn. We pay tribute to the courage and commitment of health workers who risk their lives serving those in need.

Excellencies,

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development the world leaders have pledged to leave no one behind, including in health. While emphasising the importance of the overall Goal 3 and the other specific health-related targets, we believe that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is central to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve it, we need strategic vision, political commitment, multi-stakeholder cooperation and adequate resources, as well as targeted actions to reach those in our societies who are in the most vulnerable situations. Continued efforts on human rights, gender equality and reducing health inequalities are paramount in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including in the health-related goals and targets.

Ensuring equitable access to people-centred, integrated, quality health services, access to safe and affordable medicines and vaccines, and promoting well-being for all at all ages is based on strong health systems, including access to comprehensive primary health services. This goes hand in hand with the WHO objective of attaining the highest possible level of health by all peoples. To achieve UHC, WHO needs to continue supporting countries in strengthening their primary health services, essential public health functions and health security capacities, as well as addressing AMR.

WHO plays an essential role in driving the UHC agenda at global level, working with Member States, partners and other relevant actors to help strengthen health systems and their good governance, monitor progress, encourage political commitment and support resource mobilization. As domestic public finance is critical to implement the 2030 Agenda in all countries, achieving UHC makes no
exception. In this regard, we commend WHO’s work on tracking health financing, resulting in valuable analyses of health expenditure data and global trends, which can serve as public goods and basis for policy dialogue with countries and steering further progress towards UHC, in line with the triple billion goal of the 13th General Programme of Work.

Digital technologies can accelerate progress towards UHC and ensuring that no one, even in remote locations, is left behind. By helping to empower citizens, increasing health professionals’ access to information and exchanges, using resources more efficiently and fostering health reform, digital health - as part of the health system as a whole - can improve access, efficiency and quality of health services.

The EU and its Member States are strongly committed partners in supporting the UHC agenda globally and have contributed constructively to ambitious resolutions under the UHC agenda item this year. We reaffirm our support for a rights-based approach and effective coverage, including financial risk protection, of high-quality health services made available for all, including primary and mental health services as well as sexual and reproductive health services, in line with Agenda 2030.

In a changing global health landscape, WHO should be well equipped to assist Member States and to coordinate partners’ work towards the achievement of the health-related SDGs.

We welcome your commitment, Director General, and that of your new management team, to the transformation agenda and to making WHO a champion of UN reform. We are ready to support, in a continued dialogue with this Organisation, measures that enhance effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency in its functioning.
Good governance, transparency and good communication are essential, as steps are taken internally to enable WHO to deliver on the GPW13 at the three levels of the Organisation. The EU and its Member States supported the adoption of GPW13 and would now like to see how vision translates into action, including how resources are allocated to programmes.

We have expressed support for the new format of the proposed Programme Budget 2020-2021, welcoming the increased clarity on the Secretariat’s outputs and the focus on measurable impact, as well as the novel integrated approach. At the same time, we continue to emphasize that enhancing the Organisation’s cost-effectiveness should come hand in hand with any budget increase. In this regard, we want to understand better how an increased budget will help implement the new operating model centered on country-level impact. Equally, we remain interested in detailed plans for achieving the proposed $99 million efficiencies and their impact on WHO internal processes, functions and human resources.

We count on WHO to play its part in the UN Development System reform aimed at improving the UN system’s coherence, especially at country level, and look forward to a thorough discussion on this topic under the dedicated agenda item.

We have previously asked WHO to more proactively take the lead and provide opportunities for relevant partners in the field of global health to come together. We welcome the collaborative efforts resulting in the Global Action Plan for “Healthy Lives and Well-being for All”. We count on the 12 partners’ commitment to support collective and coordinated action for the implementation of SDG 3 and the health-related goals and targets by 2030, including through maintaining robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to deliver on its vision.

We also commend WHO for looking into innovative and sustainable ways for financing its work and strengthening its partnerships and welcome the first Partners
Forum held in Stockholm in April. We look forward to hearing how its conclusions will be further developed into action.

To conclude, the EU and its Member States are fully committed to continue supporting and contributing constructively to the work of this Organisation, which should focus on its constitutional normative and coordinating mandate for global health, its core functions and comparative advantages.

Thank you.