



European Union
Statement

WHO

76th World Health Assembly

(21-30 May 2023)

Item 15.2 – WHO’s work in health emergencies
• Implementation of resolution WHA75.11 (2022)
AND
15.3 Global Health for Peace Initiative

Geneva, 23 May 2023

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EU Statement

Chair,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina* as well as the potential candidate country Georgia align themselves with this statement.

As we gather today, the health of millions is threatened by overlapping disasters stemming from climate change, infectious disease outbreaks, and soaring rates of malnutrition fuelled by conflict. In this unprecedented moment of intersecting emergencies, let me begin by expressing our deep appreciation for WHO’s work across the world, reaching those most in need with urgent and life-saving support. The tireless efforts of health staff from WHO and its partners operating in 54 emergencies continue to save lives, support recovery efforts, and prevent the spread of diseases within countries and across borders.

* North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

We thank the WHO for its rapid action in face of recent crisis in Sudan as well as in the response to the Türkiye and Syria earthquakes earlier this year. As 2023 progresses, Member States have an important role to ensure that the WHO has the necessary means to continue to respond to crises swiftly and effectively when they first arise.

Looking ahead, we support that the WHO acts as an enabler for health and peace in partnership with key actors, to address the health needs of people in conflict affected area. We look forward to the adoption of the roadmap for the Global Health for Peace Initiative. Once adopted, it remains key that health interventions under the GHPI, fully respecting the principles of conflict and gender sensitivity, permeated by “do no harm principles” and guided by community involvement.

Chair,

In our increasingly interconnected world, local events can have far-reaching global consequences. In my own region, the worst war in decades continues to rage to the detriment of the health not only by those directly affected by violence, but of people far beyond Europe. The exacerbation of an already significant global food security crises, as well as the risks of radiological, biological, and chemical events and hazards are some of the wider than regional health and humanitarian impacts resulting from the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine. The extensive health response in host-and refugee receiving countries is another example of the far-reaching effects of this unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal war of aggression which we condemn in the strongest possible terms. We call on the Russian Federation to immediately cease its hostilities, including attacks on health care facilities and health workers.

We welcome the Director General’s updated report and commend the WHO for the commitment to stay and deliver in Ukraine as well as in refugee and host-receiving countries, for as long as it takes. We encourage continued action to mitigate the negative health and humanitarian impacts of Russia’s war and support recurrent reporting on implementation of the resolution WHA75.11.

Further efforts are needed to ensure access to basic health and care services, mental health and psychosocial support services, routine vaccination, and treatments, as well as access to services related to gender-based violence and support for survivors. We recognize the efforts to address prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, which should be further strengthened. We welcome the updated reporting on measures taken to address the deterioration of sexual and reproductive health, as well as maternal and child health.

The disruptions to health service delivery in occupied and recently regained territories as well as in areas close to the combat lines continue to be of specific concern. We ask the DG to continue to pay attention to these specific issues in future reporting on the health emergency in Ukraine, stemming from Russia's aggression.

Under the guise of neutrality, Russia has presented a draft resolution in an attempt to absolve the Russian Federation of all responsibility for its aggression towards Ukraine and the health emergency it has triggered. We call on all Member States not to support it and to stand in solidarity with Ukraine.

In closing, the EU and its Member States confirm the call to redouble support for diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in Ukraine consistent with the UN Charter, in line with the UNGA resolution adopted on the 23rd of February with broad cross-regional support.

As often underlined by the Director General, there cannot be health without peace and there cannot be peace without health. We will continue to stand in solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

I thank you.