



**European Union**  
**Statement**

**WHO**

**76<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**

**(21-30 May 2023)**

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**Item 3 – Address by the Director-General**

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**Geneva, 22 May 2023**

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**76<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly**

**Item 3: Address by the Director-General**

**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, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina\* and the potential candidate country Georgia align themselves with this statement.

The EU thanks the Director-General for his address and his leadership. We join the celebration of WHO's 75th anniversary, and would like to thank the WHO for its crucial and tireless work. 75 years later, the WHO constitution remains as relevant as ever. As DG pointed out, there has been extraordinary progress in protecting and promoting health, with significant increases in life expectancy, declines in maternal and child mortality, the eradication of smallpox, the 99

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

percent polio incidence reduction, and widespread childhood immunization around the globe.

Today, the world is facing serious interlinked global challenges ranging from COVID-19 to food, energy, economic and triple environmental crises, hampering the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and particularly SDG3. We can only achieve the SDG's and address the health dimensions of these challenges with worldwide cooperation, solidarity and a responsive, efficient and fully funded WHO fit for purpose. We stand with all our partners in advancing health based on solidarity, humanity, equity, gender equality and respect for human rights, and reaffirm our commitment to the triple billion targets.

The health emergency in Ukraine resulting from the Russian aggression, is alarming and the worst our region has seen in decades. We would like to thank the WHO and its staff for their commitment to stay and deliver in Ukraine as well as in refugee and host-receiving countries, for as long as it takes. We condemn Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms, including attacks on health facilities, and we reiterate our full solidarity with Ukraine and its people.

It is crucial that we embrace the one health approach, involving all sectors to realize potential win-win situations in achieving health objectives that will benefit both the environment and save millions of lives. The economic case for sustainable investments in health is crystal clear: investing in health improves productivity, boosts employment and increases prosperity globally.

As of 5 May, Covid-19 is no longer a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, however we still face clinical concerns. We reiterate the need for continued leadership at all levels, multilateral cooperation, and a modern and effective international system with actors with distinct and well-defined complementary roles and responsibilities. WHO has a central role to play to

deliver on the SDGs, to provide leadership, knowledge, advice, and technical support to all countries. It is crucial to foster inclusive collaboration between international actors and to counteract fragmentation across the global health architecture also beyond the emergency agenda, leaving no region of the world behind.

The EU is committed to strengthening the legal and normative framework for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response through revised International Health Regulations and an ambitious Pandemic Agreement that make real difference on the ground. We look forward to working together for successful outcomes at this year's UNGA high level meetings in New York, in support to our work here in Geneva.

Finally, the EU acknowledges the inclusive process to develop the draft Programme Budget, to strengthen country capacity and to push the achievement of the triple billion targets and health-related SDG's. Implementing the reforms on WHO financing as well as to further increase transparency, accountability, compliance and efficiency will be crucial for WHO to deliver on its mandate of high-quality technical advice and support to all countries.

Thank you, Director-General.