



Ministry of Health  
Republic of Latvia

**76th World Health Assembly**

**Plenary**

**General discussion under item 3**

**22 May 2022**

**Remarks by  
H.E. Līga Meņģelšone  
Minister of Health of the Republic of Latvia**

*Dear Director General,*

I thank you for your report. This is my first World Health Assembly as the Minister of Health of my country, and I am glad to learn more about the Organization's challenges and success stories thereof.

*Excellencies,*

Today's tagline is "saving lives" and indeed – the Organization has been actually doing so since its inception, reaffirming its role as one of the most pivotal agencies within the United Nations' family. I sincerely congratulate everyone as we reach the 75 year milestone.

*Dear colleagues,*

I believe that on this occasion we should first and foremost honor the backbone of this Organization - our healthcare workers. They are the ones who work tirelessly every minute of the day saving lives and I salute them.

Yet, we live in a globalized world ridden by continuous and manifold transborder crisis. I believe this is where WHO's guidance and leadership is most necessary and welcomed. WHO's effective handling of the Covid-19 pandemic has affirmed this, as has WHO's activities in various hotspots around the world. In this regard, I would like to emphasise that true inclusiveness is vital if we wish to effectively achieve the Triple billion targets<sup>1</sup> of this organization.

*Excellencies,*

Three decades ago the people of the Baltic States came together in the Baltic Way – I believe this is the kind of solidarity we need to maintain also today if we wish to see a better world. In this context, I wish to express Latvia's heartfelt support to the people of Ukraine who are suffering, as we speak, from the Russian Federation's brutal assault. While the Russian Federation is a member state of the WHO, it continues immoral attacks on Ukrainian health system. It has already destroyed more than 300 hospitals and other health facilities, more than 200 healthcare workers have been injured or killed.

We align with the majority of WHO's Member States and condemn Russia's unprovoked, unjustified, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine in the strongest possible terms, including attacks on health facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage;  
1 billion more people better protected from health emergencies;  
1 billion more people enjoying better health and well-being.

It is also in the spirit of solidarity that Latvia joined many other EURO region countries in calling for the closure of the WHO European Office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in Moscow. I welcome the recent adoption of the decision to relocate the Office to Copenhagen. This sets, I believe, a good precedent for other international organizations and agencies, operating in the Russian Federation.

*Excellencies,*

To conclude, I would like to remind that the World Health Organisation is being made up of us, the Member States, and how it will work is determined by ourselves. We can build the most beautiful house in the world, but without responsible and committed residents, this house will not be sustainable.

It has been a privilege to speak to you here today.

**Thank you!**