



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
76th World Health Assembly
21 May - 30 May 2023 • Geneva, Switzerland

Philippine national statement on
“WHO at 75: Saving lives, driving health for all”

Statement by Department of Health OIC-Secretary
DR. MARIA ROSARIO S. VERGEIRE, MPH, CESO II
Co-Chief Delegate of the Philippines to the 76th World Health Assembly

The Philippines commends the World Health Organization for 75 strong years of saving lives and driving health for all. In celebration of this significant milestone, we commit our continued support for the organization and its pursuit of health security and universal health coverage.

Amidst an unprecedented global health crisis, longstanding gaps in accessing health care and addressing health determinants emerged. In response, innovative government programs to contain socio-economic impacts were needed. For the Philippines, this meant mobilizing communities, mainstreaming IPC measures, establishing referral networks, and creating comprehensive financing packages.

As the world now transitions towards a better normal, we are presented with a unique opportunity to maximize our pandemic accomplishments and permanently shift the global paradigm of health care. The pandemic taught us a painful but valuable lesson: **safeguarding health is a responsibility that all sectors must bear. Amidst the loss and disruption, we gained the better perspective that tackling the social determinants of health (SDH) — such as conflict, education, employment, housing, food security, mental health, climate change, and aging — is necessary to treat and prevent diseases.**

The Philippines also asks that we champion multilateral collaboration and boost local capabilities across health governance, surge financing, clinical research, and health intelligence. Equitable access to technologies and expertise — vaccines, PPEs, and logistics — which mitigate the effects of future pandemics must also be available. **Therefore, we strongly push for amending the International Health Regulations to strengthen pandemic preparedness, prevention, and response. We likewise call for all developed nations to align with the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel to ensure mutually beneficial arrangements for the migrant health workers, receiving countries, and source countries.**

The COVID-19 pandemic is but one of the many hurdles the WHO has had to face, and through all of it, one thing has been clear: no single State can hurdle any health crisis alone. This means that pandemic preparedness is our shared duty.

As WHO continues on with its mandates, may we remember that the global health community is only as strong as the most vulnerable health system. **It is time to rethink our “business as usual” approach to health. Health should no longer be confined within the health sector. We should think outside the box and lend sectors beyond health voices in our discussions.**

Building resilient health systems requires **cultivating health-promoting environments, addressing SDH, and most especially reorienting systems towards primary health care—a system that puts equity front and center. Doing so will not only guarantee good health for everyone, but will afford lasting gains to sectors outside of health.**

Again, the Republic of the Philippines celebrates 75 years of WHO’s strong leadership in health. The road ahead is long but, together, no challenge is insurmountable. Thank you and I look forward to more productive discussions ahead.

Time limit: 3 minutes