

**Portugal**  
**World Health Organization**  
**76<sup>th</sup> Session of the World Health Assembly**  
(21 - 30 May 2023)

13.2 Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on  
the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and mental health

Chair,

Excellences,

I have the honour to address the 76<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly on behalf of Portugal. We align with previous statement made by the European Union.

Addressing noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) is critical due to their significant global impact on premature death and disability. NCD risk factors like alcohol and tobacco impact and overload health systems, affecting health emergency preparedness and responses negatively. Health promotion and disease prevention, specially through implementation of cost-effective interventions including mental health prioritizing are key to reducing the burden of NCDs and ensuring healthier and more resilient populations.

We express our appreciation for the updated menu of policy options and cost-effective interventions presented at EB152 for the prevention and control of NCDs. We recommend that the World Health Assembly endorse this menu and strongly urge the implementation of the WHO's acceleration plan to combat obesity. It is crucial to expedite national efforts in this regard.

As one of the 28 leading countries prioritizing this issue, we take pride in our longstanding commitment and dedicated work to shape our policy environment in this domain.

Chair,

We commend the work on the NCD implementation roadmap, specifically the recognition of mental disorders as contributors to the global NCD burden. Mental disorders, along with other conditions, are major causes of mortality and morbidity worldwide. Furthermore, we must prioritize mental health and acknowledge its significance for individual well-being, as it has been overlooked for too long.

We are just now overcoming the pandemic stress. Estimates suggest a minimum 25% increase in depression and anxiety disorders, disproportionately affecting women and young people. Stigma, discrimination, violence, and coercion related to mental health continue to present significant challenges. The pandemic has exacerbated the global mental health emergency, serving as a reminder that these conditions impact us all.

Recognizing this, we commend the WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, which supports national action. Portugal aligns with the plan's objectives, including effective leadership, comprehensive care services, health promotion, and strengthened research. In the past years we have established a National Mental Health Policy Coordination, reviewed our legislation, and embraced a human rights-based approach. Furthermore, we extend our support to the *WHO Quality Rights initiative*.

Mental health conditions worsen among vulnerable populations. Given the lack of investment and the increased incidence of acute conditions resulting from the past stressful years and related measures, it is imperative that we enhance mental health support in the incoming years.

In conclusion, let us globally and individually prioritize mental health. Together, we can alleviate the burden of noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions, fostering a healthier and more resilient future.

Thank you.

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