

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

Item 24 Participation of Member States in WHO meetings  
*Voluntary Health Trust Fund for small island developing States (terms of reference)*

Mr Chair,  
Director General,  
Excellences,

As a coastal nation composed also of several islands in the middle of the Atlantic, Portugal's culture, economy, and identity are closely intertwined with the sea. The country has a rich maritime heritage and a strong seafaring, exploration, and fishing tradition. Portugal also recognizes the importance of sustainable ocean management and is actively engaged in ocean research, conservation, and the blue economy.

As a country with deep roots and historical connection with the ocean, we empathise with the challenges Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face. Their size, remote location, and vast distances pose unique obstacles. We experience the challenges of supply chains in small islands or how difficult it is to maintain capacity in the national health services in the islands. These difficulties are further compounded by the impacts of climate change and the ongoing environmental crisis. SIDS are particularly burdened by vulnerabilities that create stress and jeopardize well-being.

All international support to address these challenges is welcome, particularly to safeguard SIDS healthcare systems and advance the implementation of the SDGs.

Chair,

Portugal welcomes the Resolution previously adopted to establish a Voluntary Health Fund for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in WHO and commends the adoption on this Health Assembly of its Terms of reference. As it occurs in other UN fora, we recognize this as a fair measure to encourage wider participation from interested states. As an example, Portugal is a regular donor in the Human Rights Council for a similar fund that aims to promote SIDS participation. This solidarity is the basis of an effective multilateral system.

Thank you

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