



European Union

Statement

WHO

158th session of the Executive Board

(2-7 February 2026)

Item 2 – General Debate

Geneva, 2 February 2026

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EU Statement

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova* and Georgia as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

We meet at a critical juncture for global health. We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing geopolitical crises and humanitarian catastrophes unfolding across several regions. Armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, the impacts of climate change, and inequalities continue to place unprecedented pressure on health systems worldwide and on the global health architecture. We call on all Member States to uphold international humanitarian law and protect civilians, health infrastructure and health workers, whose safety is indispensable to safeguarding lives.

At the same time, resources become more and more constrained. 2025 was a very difficult year for WHO and its staff. We sincerely thank the Organisation's leadership and staff for their dedication and hard work in implementing the reforms and the prioritization exercise over the course of the past year. These challenges present an opportunity for WHO to emerge stronger and more efficient and fit-for purpose, delivering on areas of comparative advantage on global level. We urge WHO to continue implementing reforms in 2026 in order to facilitate tangible change.

The EU and its Member States fully recognize the importance of national responsibility and ownership related to health policy. In line with this the EU and its Member States attach great value to WHO's constitutional mandate, role and functions, including norms and standards setting, promoting global health security and supporting countries in strengthening their health systems, including health promotion. These functions are essential to achieving global health outcomes and advancing the Fourteenth General Programme of Work, focusing on the areas identified through the recent prioritization process, while ensuring no person, country or region is left behind.

Furthermore, we welcome WHO's support to Member States in implementing the relevant critical outcomes of the Fourth UN High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health and other initiatives.

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

We underline the importance of prioritisation and results-based management as well as pursuing flexible, predictable and sustainable financing in collaboration with Member States. Efficient use of resources and transparent planning are critical for WHO to deliver.

Good governance, transparency, and accountability remain fundamental. We welcome efforts to improve governance, and to reinforce oversight, compliance, and ethical standards, including the prevention of sexual misconduct. Responsible management and governance, allow WHO to be fit for purpose.

We welcome WHO's proposal to host a joint process bringing together current global health architecture reform and the UN80 Initiative discussions, and urge WHO to coordinate closely with other relevant global health actors. We support efforts to strengthen coherence, efficiency, and collaboration across the global health system.

The EU and its Member States reiterate our commitment to multilateralism and partnership. We encourage WHO to continue engaging closely with Member States and partners to strengthen global health outcomes. We stand ready to work with WHO to ensure the organisation will continue to be ready to respond to global health challenges.

Thank you.