Chair,

Director-General,

Colleagues,

Let me start by expressing my personal gratitude to health care workers across the world for their dedication during these challenging times.

Chair,

Belgium fully aligns itself to the statement made by Croatia on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

We need three essential instruments in the fight against COVID-19: a whole of government approach; effective health systems; and diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and other medical equipment.

WHO plays an essential role in the management of all three of these instruments. Therefore, I explicitly express my support to the WHO and its leadership.

Chair,

Allow me to make a few remarks:

1. First, a reliable and coherent monitoring of the pandemic is key. Belgium decided to report not only deaths from confirmed COVID-patients, but also suspected cases. Although WHO recommends this approach, we note that we’re one of the very
few countries to do so. Unless we all register data in a uniform way, effective monitoring is impossible.

2. Secondly, in search of a treatment and a vaccine we need international cooperation, coordination and solidarity. We count on WHO to help us create instruments to assure the equitable access to a possible vaccine.

Belgium has a strong tradition regarding the development of new treatments and vaccines. We recently allocated 5 million euros to CEPI for research and decided to invest 20 million euros in an academic anti-infection unit, a Belgian “vaccinopolis”, to quickly test and evaluate the efficacy of vaccines on humans.

Belgium is ready to show its international solidarity by making ICU beds available for humanitarian personnel in its hospitals.

3. To end, I would like to stress the importance of accessible primary health care services. In order to mitigate the collateral damage of this crisis, we should avoid interruptions in essential initiatives on vaccination, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and neglected tropical diseases.

I thank you for your attention,