

**STATEMENT FROM THE ITALIAN MINISTER OF HEALTH TO THE WHO'S WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
18 MAY 2020**

Mr. President, Mr. Director General, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

Firstly, I would like to express Italy's appreciation for the decision to convene this session of the World Health Assembly, even though we are unable to hold it in the usual manner.

In this period, we have all taken major measures to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, and we must be ready to account promptly for our choices to our citizens and their representatives.

We therefore believe that it is absolutely necessary to start immediately, also within WHO, joint reflection on an emergency that is affecting the whole of humankind and, subsequently, to develop a broader assessment of this experience.

A first consideration is certainly the central role taken on by health at this time in history; it is a role that must be maintained and strengthened in the future, to ensure that we are prepared for the challenges to the health, security and social and economic stability of our communities.

Consequently, the national ministries and international bodies in charge of these issues will also need to enter a new season and be revitalized by extensive reforms.

In particular, as regards WHO, we must ensure that it maintains and strengthens its central role, especially in times of crisis.

This means that from this point forward we need to work together to build a stronger Agency, rethinking its role and operation.

At the same time, we must ensure that it is fully independent of any external influence - whether political or financial - that it is only guided by science, that it ensures dialogue and information sharing between the Member States and the Secretariat, and that it is transparent in its processes and fast in responding to challenges that can be vast and complex, such as this pandemic.

We should all commit to supporting this process from today, allocating appropriate human and financial resources to it, with the sole objective of raising the global preparedness and response capacity of individual States, with the support of the Agency's high-level technical and scientific expertise and solid organization at the service of all people.