

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BELIZE
73rd World Health Assembly (resumed)
Committee A, Pillar 2/Agenda Items 13.1, 13.2 and 14
10 November 2020

Thank you Chair.

The reports presented on Items 13.1, 13.2 and 14 show that we continue to face a once in a generation health pandemic of a truly global scale with an impact far, far beyond health. The COVID-19 pandemic has placed an extraordinary spotlight on the multilateral work and role of the World Health Organization.

When I addressed this WHA plenary in May, Belize had recorded only 18 cases of COVID-19 and 2 deaths. Since then, the virus has been unleashed furiously on the Belizean population. We have now recorded over 4000 infections (4230) and 71 deaths in a population of just over 400,000. Over the last several days, new positivity test records are being set.

Despite the measures taken by government to restrict movements and despite the ceaseless public education campaigns to implore citizens to wear masks, practice physical distance and exercise good hygiene the virus has continued to spread. Our public health system is under protracted stress. At times our hospitals have reached full capacity and our front-line workers have themselves become infected, reducing the ranks of health care workers and other essential personnel.

This pandemic has therefore underscored the urgency of expanding protection for more people from health emergencies. In this truly interconnected and interdependent world only a multilateral institution drawing its membership from all States can coordinate such universal health security.

To ensure more people are better protected from health emergencies we need to reinforce our commitment to universal health coverage by 2030, invest more in primary health care and preventive strategies, address with alacrity non-communicable diseases and accelerate our efforts toward achieving the health-related SDGs.

In these most difficult times, regional and international solidarity and cooperation have been essential to Belize's daily management of the pandemic. The Caribbean Public Health Agency has been coordinating the regional Caribbean response to COVID-19 by providing daily technical guidance, science-based policy advice to decision makers and supporting public education, procurement and data collection surveillance.

The leadership role of the WHO has been critical in providing recommendations based on the latest science, policy options and forging partnerships to support Member States. The ACT accelerator is a pioneering approach to convening equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. In particular, the COVAX facility will be essential to

the ability of small states like mine to access vaccines for COVID-19. Indeed, Belize has already joined.

Chair, Belize agrees that Taiwan has stood out for its exemplary management of COVID-19. It has held infections and deaths to record lows, avoided community spread while maintaining the functioning of its society and economy, and while assisting many countries including Belize. There is no doubt that Taiwan's experience and expertise in managing health emergencies should benefit the international community. In the interest of our international health security system, Belize reiterates its call for the inclusion of Taiwan as an observer in our World Health Assemblies.

Thank You.