



European Union
Statement

WHO

73th Session of the World Health Assembly
(9-14 November 2020)

Item 15.3: Influenza preparedness

Geneva, 10 November 2020

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EU Statement

I am speaking on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement

The EU and its Member States consider the WHO Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework as a unique, innovative and fair access and benefit sharing instrument on influenza viruses.

As an essential component of the PIP Framework, the GISRS network carries out continuous risk assessments of circulating influenza viruses. Had an influenza virus caused the ongoing pandemic, we would most probably have received an early warning through the GISRS Network. The existing contractual arrangements of the Framework would have resulted in a timely sharing of the influenza virus in question with all relevant stakeholders.

This could have led to an even earlier start of the R&D on countermeasures based on public health needs, including vaccines, than what we saw earlier this year. The producers, who contribute to the Framework annually through membership contributions, would have donated ten percent of their production to WHO to be distributed to countries in need. The funds saved from

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

membership contributions could have been used to start procurements and to meet other immediate needs.

We are going to enter in-the near future in discussions on how to improve pandemic surveillance, risk assessment, access to pathogens and their genetic sequences and benefit sharing in health emergencies, which from currently the basis of ongoing influenza activities. In this regard, we would like to point out that the GISRS network hosted by 124 countries, as well as the GISAID platform for information sharing, have shown their usefulness also in the monitoring of the COVID-19 virus.

While the EU and its Member States expect the PIP Framework to continue contribution to global health security, we believe that the Framework is among the already existing arrangements that must be looked at very closely in the upcoming debates on how to improve global pandemic preparedness.

In conclusion, The EU and its Member States welcome the work of the Secretariat to strengthen influenza preparedness, including in line with the Secretariat's Global Influenza Strategy.

We thank the secretariat for the recent briefing on decreased influenza virus sharing during the first months of the pandemic. We encourage countries to continue or restart sharing of influenza viruses to use fully the instrument that is in place to protect us both from seasonal and pandemic influenza.

Finally, we regret the withdrawal of a key donor of the WHO influenza programme and look forward to hearing from the Secretariat how the continued functioning of the Programme will be ensured.