



European Union

Statement

WHO

WHA73 Agenda item 15.3 **Strengthening efforts on food safety**

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Item 15.3 Accelerating efforts on food safety

EU Statement

Mr. Chair,
Director-General,
Members of the Executive Board,
Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union 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 align themselves with this statement.

The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit has the objective to raise worldwide awareness to the fact that in order to achieve the SDGs we all must work together to transform the way the world produces, consumes and thinks about food, that we all work towards healthier, more sustainable, inclusive, resilient and equitable food systems . In the EU, the farm to fork strategy is also aiming at comprehensively addressing the challenges of sustainable food systems.

In this perspective, the EU and its Member States welcome the adoption of the WHA Resolution 73.5 on strengthening food safety since this resolution sets the framework for very concrete actions by WHO and its Member States and is

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

already a major contribution for the preparation and the implementation of the decisions of the Summit.

We also welcome the first concrete step for the implementation of the resolution through the establishment by WHO of the Technical Advisory Group on Food Safety that will provide technical guidance and inputs to support WHO's efforts and work in food safety.

The update of the WHO global strategy on food safety is much needed since food safety systems of many Member States are underdeveloped and need significant improvement to address new and emerging challenges – and there are many. The EU and its Member States look forward to contribute to the development of this strategy in view of its adoption on 2022. We also note the decision of FAO to work on its new food safety strategy with a focus on creating a food environment that stimulates access to safe and nutritious foods and the uptake of healthy diets. More than ever, close cooperation between WHO and FAO is critical to achieve the objectives of the resolution, taking into account the One Health approach and the relevance of food safety to sustainable food systems. The development of both strategies in close conjunction is a unique opportunity for ensuring the coordination of the two Agency's strategic efforts on food safety.

The resolution also highlights the need for WHO to strengthen its capacities and resources to support the activities of the Codex Alimentarius Commission. The 2017 Internal evaluation of WHO's normative function[†] showed the importance and the strong functioning of Codex. A key part of the success of Codex is that it

[†] Evaluation of WHO's Normative Function, Volume 1: Evaluation report, 2017
https://www.who.int/about/evaluation/who_normative_function_report_july2017.pdf?ua=1 (pre-publication version)

relies on robust and independent scientific assessments and advice provided jointly by WHO/FAO scientific bodies. It is the duty of WHO to play its part to ensure stable, sustainable, predictable and adequate financial support to these scientific bodies for the provision of scientific advice by experts from countries at all stages of standard development. This can only be ensured by limiting to a minimum the reliance of these programs on uncertain and unpredictable voluntary donations. This is a long-standing request that the EU and its Member States and other WHO Members States have repeatedly made here and in the Codex Alimentarius for the last ten years but which has not yet been answered. We trust that the resolution will enable to address this long-standing issue.

The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) and its ability to share rapid information on food hazards and risks is a precious tool that should be further developed in order to continue advancing the global public health protection. While this remarkable tool supports the day-to-day management of food hazards, we also need to rely on robust indicators of the global burden of foodborne diseases. The new report on the global burden of foodborne diseases containing up-to-date estimates of mortality, as well as incidence, and burden in terms of disability-adjusted life years to be prepared by 2025 will address this critical gap and should be the foundation to establish regular monitoring of this information.

Thank you.