

UKRAINE

Statement by Mr. Maksym Stepanov, Minister of Health of Ukraine, - Resumed session of WHA73 (9–14 November 2020)

**Honourable President of the WHO,
Distinguished Director-General,
Excellencies, Colleagues,
Fellow delegates,**

I welcome this opportunity to make this statement on behalf of Ukraine at this resumed session of the World Health Assembly. The discussions and decisions taken over the next days will pave the way for the ongoing essential work of the World Health Organisation and inform our efforts to improve the health and well-being of all of our citizens.

Each of the 194 countries represented here faces different challenges in providing healthcare for its citizens. The one uniting factor today is the global fight against the Covid-19 pandemic which has touched all corners of the globe. We are too aware of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic all over the world. The recent exponential increase in infections in Ukraine and many other countries is a cause of great concern and will continue to exert pressure on our health system infrastructure and staff for some time to come. We pay tribute to the courage and sacrifice of the healthcare professionals who continue to fight daily and devotedly to curb the spread of COVID-19. As we begin to better understand the nature of the virus, and appropriate treatments and with the hope of effective vaccines not too far on the horizon, we will hopefully see an end to this pandemic.

The ongoing resurgence of the virus in many countries underpins the importance of developing safe and effective vaccines. Ukraine fully supports the WHO in its efforts to ensure vaccines are appropriately tested and approved and also advocates for an equitable distribution of vaccines to all nations in a spirit of global solidarity.

Ukraine has recently signed a Biennial Collaborative Agreement with the Regional office for Europe of the WHO. This comprehensive agreement will facilitate joint cooperation on a broad spectrum of healthcare reform initiatives in support of the Government's commitment to provide access to a high quality, well-funded, staffed and administered healthcare system for every citizen.

The emphasis is also placed by the Ukrainian authorities on the provision of healthcare for those affected by the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine including 3 million citizens living in close proximity to the conflict area and more than 1.4 million displaced as a consequence. This ongoing aggression is taking a severe toll on the physical and psychological health of a large part of our population. We are equally concerned about the access to quality healthcare for our citizens living in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The above-mentioned agreement is, more importantly, a solid example of the ongoing practical cooperation between the WHO and Ukraine. It is a clear indication of the WHO commitment, backed up by substantial funding, to the people of Ukraine and our combined vision for excellence in the provision of healthcare. We look forward to future success in our joint endeavours.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the WHO staff for cooperation and assistance to Ukraine and convey best wishes to all for a successful continuation of the 73 World Health Assembly.

I thank you.