HUNGARY
Script to the video message on
the 74th session of the World Health Assembly

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17. Public Health emergencies: preparation and response – COVID-19 response

Dear Director General, Chair, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

Hungary has been paying close attention to the IHR and has maintained its epidemiological surveillance system in a strict manner, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. For us a quick response system is of essence, and in the beginning of 2020 we were able to react quickly and swiftly for the upcoming threat. On the 24 of January the first European Covid-19 case was reported, and on the same day Hungary started the necessary preparations.

The COVID-19 epidemic has so far reached Hungary in three waves.. The third wave began in February 2021 and thanks to our far reaching ambitions in the national vaccination campaign, its descending phase has started.

During the second and third waves we have been highlighting the importance of continuous testing, and been following the social response for the introduced restrictive measures. The citizens were supporting the government's decision and followed the set rules and advice, which resulted in the healthcare's system ability to withstand the pressure caused by the increasing number of hospitalization.

At the same time, Hungary started preparations for an ambitious vaccination programme. The vaccination started on 27 December 2020 after the arrival of the first Pfizer lots. First, health care workers, caregivers and residents in social institutions were vaccinated. Vaccination of high-risk chronic patients in the general population is currently underway. The vaccination campaign for pregnant women has started with the Pfizer vaccine and before the re-opening of schools the teachers and lately teenagers have also been involved. An online booking website has been dedicated for the citizens to register for their shots, regardless of age or health status.

At the moment intense work is being done at daily level to vaccinate as many people as possible and the results of these efforts can already be measured in lives saved. Our vaccination procurement has been reaching wide, beside the European joint procurement, we have vaccine stocks from our Eastern partners. The vaccination campaign is currently underway with six types of vaccines, as in addition to EU vaccine purchases, the Russian-developed Sputnik V and the Chinese Sinopharm vaccines are also available.

Due to this success, Hungary is now slowly reopening, allowing everyone to enjoy open air terraces, while those vaccinated can visit cinemas, theatres, restaurants, cafés etc. We could reopen schools and kindergartens, the curfew has been delayed till midnight, the healthcare system is under much less pressure, and people in general can cautiously return to their normal lives.

We are ready to work on international and multilateral level to end this pandemic and prevent the next one. We do recognize the important work and proposals of the Evaluation panels in this process.

Thank you for your kind attention!