REPUBLIC OF MALTA

WHA 74 Agenda Item 3

General Discussion, response to DG Address

Address by Hon Chris Fearne

Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Health

Madam President,

Director General,

Regional Directors,

Colleagues,

Malta aligns itself with the statement delivered by Portugal on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

A year on, COVID's great toll on health, economies and society in general is evident, but our shared threat has brought shared solutions. Amongst others, we know that vaccines work.

The vaccination roll-out is well underway in Malta and we are tangibly experiencing good results in terms of lowered positivity rates and a significant decrease in hospitalisations, ITU admissions and COVID-related deaths.

Collaborative work in joint procurement of COVID-19 vaccines by European Member States has proven to be an exemplary mechanism, demonstrating that together we can achieve better outcomes. Such advance purchase agreements could be replicated widely in many fields to encourage R&D and improve access and price transparency of cancer treatments, orphan drugs, anti-microbials and others.

Malta reiterates that all efforts should be maintained towards equitable access to and fair distribution of quality, safe, efficacious and affordable medicines, and vaccines. We commend WHO's work with partners towards ensuring wider availability and access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Gaining public trust and addressing vaccine hesitancy through a broad communication strategy, Malta has vaccinated 70% of our adult population with at least a single dose of the vaccine; 38% have been fully vaccinated.

In the light of increased mobility and until adequate global immunity levels are achieved, we also recognise that prudence, continued surveillance and timely public health action is crucial. We look forward to further developments and technical guidance regarding the length of immunity afforded by the various vaccines.

Looking ahead, we recognise the significant impact of this crisis on the mental health and wellbeing of our citizens and workers, including healthcare workers and other frontliners who have worked tirelessly, often going beyond the line of duty. Malta continues to implement and build on our National Mental Health Strategy with a focus on improving mental health services, particularly in the community. We appreciate the prominence being given to mental health by WHO and look forward to engaging further in discussions during the international high-level EURO meeting in July.

Likewise, Malta calls for further multisectoral action and collaboration to tackle antimicrobial resistance, learning from the pandemic to address the growing threat of AMR.

Lastly, Malta wishes to express its appreciation and support to WHO and thanks DG Tedros for his leadership throughout this extended

difficult period; we remain committed to working proactively and collaboratively towards a better, healthier, safer and fairer world.

Thank you