REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
74th World Health Assembly
24 May -01 June 2021 *Virtual Platform*

Pillar	**2**	**ONE BILLION MORE PEOPLE PROTECTED FROM HEALTH EMERGENCIES**
Agenda	**17.3**	**WHO's work in health emergencies** • Strengthening WHO's global emergency preparedness and response • Strengthening preparedness for health emergencies: implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005)
	18	**Mental health preparedness for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Thank you, Chair. The Philippines joins the list of co-sponsors of the resolution penned by the EU, as a follow up to the WHA 73.1 resolution on COVID-19 response, and the Group of Friends led decision on a WHA Special Session to consider an instrument on pandemic preparedness and response.

The Philippines, cognizant of the multifaceted public health, economic and social issues brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, is one with the WHO and the global health community in its efforts in strengthening emergency preparedness and response to public health emergencies. We affirm the important role of the WHO in leading the charge towards more prepared, secure and resilient health systems as espoused by the International Health Regulations. Thus, we support all initiatives that are geared towards the strengthening of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme so it becomes more responsive to the dynamic and complex needs of our times. In particular, early alert and notification should lead to early action, and early response should facilitate advance coordination and promote trust. These are important both at the international and national levels.

Our own experience brought to the fore the importance of compliance to the IHR. If only all member states have built stronger core capacities for preparedness, surveillance and response, we know we would all be delivering better and global response would have been more effective. So through this crisis, we see a great opportunity being presented to us.

In the Philippines, we are advancing the passage of important laws to strengthen the country's disease control and prevention infrastructure. Through an empowered National Focal Point (NFP), we are endeavoring to elevate health security to the highest governance level, require actions from multiple sectors, and craft a national action plan to mount a robust and coherent response to any public health emergency. We are resolute in implementing our Universal Health Care law which seeks to strengthen our national health system. We are committed to strengthening our surveillance, health promotion and emergency preparedness and response systems through sustained financial investments, focused capacity building and effective risk communication and community engagement.

The Philippines would like to extend its gratefulness to the WHO for its technical leadership and support during these difficult times. Now more than ever, we have to build better preparedness and response to public health emergencies. We can try to rewrite global health history now if we are able to do this. We are very confident we can if we, all member states, all health security stakeholders, the WHO continue working together as one community.