Portugal

World Health Organization

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17.3. Trabalho da OMS em emergências em saúde /
18. Mental health preparedness for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Chair,

Excellences,

I have the honor to address the 74th World Health Assembly on behalf of Portugal. We align ourselves with the previous statement made by the European Union.

Over the past months, we worryingly watched how the pandemic triggered a global mental health and human rights emergency. The harmful impact of the COVID-19 pandemic should not be only measured by the mortality and morbidity caused by the disease itself, but also by its indirect effects, namely the impact on people's mental health across countries and communities.

We recognize the seriousness of this situation, particularly in young people, with countries reporting up to 40% of adults struggling with mental health conditions – four times higher than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the risk of depression is increasing as long as this pandemic lasts.

We also acknowledge the complexity in dealing with simultaneous threats and health emergencies worldwide and defend the continuous improvement of timely, accurate and quality global health surveillance that moves beyond disease reporting, to include warnings and signals of a range of determinants that might be acted upon proactively and preventively.

Chair,

We welcome the launch, on June 10th, of the WHO's guidance on person-centered, rights-based community mental health services, and we congratulate WHO in leading this work and producing much needed orientations for low, middle and high income countries alike.

This represents a landmark in supporting mental health efforts, ensuring that we build forward better in the aftermath of pandemic.

We urge Member States to use this guidance to advance mental health reforms, with a focus on prevention strategies, psychosocial support and community-based services that promote and respect human-rights and fight stigma and stereotypes. These values should be included in national and global preparedness and response plans, in which mental health must be recognized as a cornerstone.

There’s no health without mental health.

Thank you.

[Words: 310/350]