Portugal

World Health Organization

74th Session of the World Health Assembly

(24 May – 2 June 2021)

34.1.C. Promoting the health of refugees and migrants

Chair,

Excellences,

I have the honour to address the 74th World Health Assembly on behalf of Portugal.

Portugal welcomes the recently established Global Program on Health and Migration, as we believe it is of the utmost importance to have clear leadership and coordinated approaches to promote the health of refugees and migrants, and to achieve universal health coverage.

Portugal recognizes the progress made since the adoption of the WHO global action plan on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, 2019–2023.

However, even in the aftermath of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact for Refugees, the most vulnerable populations are still the ones hit the most by COVID-19.

We acknowledge that migrants and refugees face the same health risks as host populations but with additional barriers in access to health services. This pandemic exacerbated those barriers and aggravated social and economic inequalities.

Since the implementation of its National Health System, Portugal has provided access to healthcare to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, striving for a Universal Health Coverage that leaves no one behind. As part of a comprehensive and crosscutting response to COVID-19, the Portuguese Government enacted legislation establishing that all migrants and asylum seekers with pending applications would have their situation considered “regular” and the validity of their documents extended.

Chair,

Portugal remains strongly committed to the inclusion and protection of the most vulnerable and defends an open and global Europe, based on the European pillar of social rights. The right to health, especially in emergencies, is a priority for us and we firmly believe the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the need to prioritize the health of migrants and refugees.

To this end, Portugal urges other Member States to include migrants and refugees in their health emergency responses, vaccination campaigns and social protection schemes, regardless of nationality and despite their legal status. Positive results are only possible with the power of collaborative action: “No one is safe until we are all safe”.

Thank you.

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