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Statement of the Republic of Slovenia

74th World Health Assembly (24 May–1 June 2021 Geneva, Switzerland)

Agenda Item 3: Address by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General

Distinguished President, Director General, dear delegates.

Slovenia aligns itself with the Statement of the EU and its Member States.

As a firm supporter of multilateralism, Slovenia recognizes the vital role of WHO in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other global health challenges. We recognize the need for strengthening WHO's mandate and capacities. As EU member, we fully support the proposed *Resolution on Strengthening WHO Preparedness and Response to Health Emergencies* and we fully align ourselves with the recommendations made by the IHR Review Committee, the IOAC and the IPPPR.

To ensure a healthier, safer, and fairer world, we need to ensure equitable access to health services, even more so in these difficult times of COVID-19.

Most immediately, that means equal access to vaccines- both through scaling up the production, as well as through investing in global mechanisms such as COVAX and the ACT- Accelerator.

In the future, we must avoid a shortage of medicines, like the one we see now with the COVID-19 vaccines. Enhancing local production of medicines will be key for preventing this kind of situations and we believe that the *Resolution on Strengthening Local Production of Medicines and Other Health Technologies* is an important step forward.

Our experience has demonstrated that prioritization of primary health care services and equal access to universal health coverage for all can address the growing burden of chronic diseases and mental health problems. Furthermore, investing into prevention and health promotion programmes that reach vulnerable groups of population should serve as an integral part of health policy. Tackling risk factors and commercial determinants of health by heeding the advice of the WHO, and implementing best buy policies; healthcare costs and more importantly, lives can be saved.

Our health system has been under the enormous pressure of the current COVID-19 pandemic, but at the same time this gives us a unique opportunity to make a significant change in building more resilient health systems. We need to use the existing resources more effectively, as well as develop and implement innovative solutions in health care financing, organization, and delivery of services. In these spheres, we see many opportunities for collaborations with other countries, with an active role of the WHO.

Thank you for your attention.