REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

74th World Health Assembly
Transcript of Video Statement of Minister of Health of Turkey H.E. Dr. Fahrettin KOCA for the General Debate 24 May 2021

Theme: "Ending this pandemic, preventing the next: building together a healthier, safer and a fairer world".

Distinguished Chair,

Esteemed Director-General,

Distinguished Participants,

I would like to begin by stating that I find this Assembly, which brought us together under the theme of "Building a healthier, safer and a fairer world" during the COVID-19 pandemic, historical and of vital importance.

Even though we endeavor to protect human health and the right to health, we have been experiencing very tragic developments wiping out all these efforts in recent days. We are painfully observing how a country, which sits at the table of the Executive Board of this Organization that is responsible for protecting and building global health and preaches on human health, poses a threat to human health by mercilessly targeting hospitals that offer healthcare services without paying any regard to the right to life of even children. If we ignore this inhumane approach, do not raise the necessary awareness as the health community to what is going on in Palestine, and do not react, the idea of building a fair and a healthy world cannot go beyond mere words, and these meetings will be devoid of any meaning.

Esteemed Participants,

The pandemic we are in has revealed from the very first day how much the international system needs to be strengthened in many areas such as supply chain, information sharing, response, data collection and global cooperation. It is obvious that the whole world has failed, especially when it comes to international solidarity. Turkey, on the other hand, has been a pioneer of international solidarity during the pandemic by supporting 158 countries and 14 international organizations.

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In addition, we must take the necessary steps quickly and decisively in strengthening WHO in the light of all data and lessons learned, including the outputs of the work of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPPR), the Independent Oversight Advisory Committee (IOAC) and the International Health Regulations (IHR) Review Committee, and in reshaping the international system. If consensus is achieved, we, as Turkey, will offer constructive support to any international initiative, including a Pandemic Framework Convention.

Distinguished Participants,

As we attach great importance to the 2021 International Year of Health and Care Workers, which was declared upon our proposal, and to the activities being carried out, we continue to work at full speed. I would like to lay emphasis on the importance of vaccinating healthcare workers. Because, this also ensures the continuity of healthcare systems. As the first stage in our COVID-19 vaccination program that is being successfully implemented in Turkey, we vaccinated over 1 million healthcare workers in 45 days. However, it is not sufficient that only healthcare workers are vaccinated. I believe that the families of healthcare workers who face the same threat should also be prioritized and I call upon the whole world on this matter. With this understanding, I would like to share with you that in Turkey, we have started vaccinating the families of healthcare workers.

On the other hand, I would like to highlight the ethical and epidemiological problems in access to COVID-19 vaccines and the danger we are facing in terms of equitable access. This issue is the most critical and urgent agenda item of international relations where we need to come up with solutions on many issues such as intellectual property rights, technology transfer, scaling up production capacities and distribution.

Esteemed Ministers,

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Distinguished Participants,

The times we are in and even the future will witness health threats and their global repercussions. As we said since the start, the solution depends on thinking on a global scale and successful local practices. However, we should not forget that the ultimate success depends on the international harmony of local practices.

Thank you.