# European Union

**Statement**

**WHO**

**74th World Health Assembly**
**(24 May-1 June 2021)**

---

**WHA74 - Items 13.2, 13.3 & 13.9:**
**Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases,**

**Expanding access to effective treatments for cancer and rare and orphan diseases, including medicines, vaccines, medical devices, diagnostics, assistive products, cell- and gene-based therapies and other health technologies; and improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines, and other health products,**

**Integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness**

---

**Geneva, 24 May 2021**

**WHA74 - Items 13.2, 13.3 & 13.9:**
**Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases,**

**Expanding access to effective treatments for cancer and rare and orphan diseases, including medicines, vaccines, medical devices, diagnostics, assistive products, cell- and gene-based therapies and other health technologies; and improving the transparency of markets for medicines, vaccines, and other health products,**

**Integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness**

**Draft EU Statement**

Chair,

Director General,

Excellencies,

Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia[*], Montenegro* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

[*] The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

We appreciate and support the Resolution on Oral Health as adopted by the 148th Executive Board.

The initiative for a global strategy on oral health as part of the NCD and UHC's agenda's is much needed and urgent in view of 3,5 billion people suffering from oral diseases worldwide, especially recognizing that these diseases are largely preventable and show definite inequalities disproportionally affecting deprived populations across the world.

Good oral health is essential for health in general, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases chronic pulmonary obstructive diseases and cancer. It is elementary for healthy ageing also in regard to self-esteem and dignity.

We believe that the resolution does full justice to the importance of preventive dentistry in tackling oral diseases.

After all, they share many risk factors with other non-communicable diseases like tobacco consumption and harmful use of alcohol, high sugar consumption, poor hygiene and unhealthy dietary habits. All of these requiring a preventive approach.

We look forward to the upcoming report by the Secretariat on global oral health which will be the basis for the strategy and its action plan. Also we express our readiness to help whenever and where ever needed and thank Sri Lanka for their excellent leadership in bringing this important issue forward.

Coming to agenda item 13. 9 - Integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness, the EU thanks the DG for the report EB148/15 and commends the Secretariat for the elaboration of draft

decision A74/9 Add. 3 on “Global Targets for 2030” concerning integrated people-centred eye care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness.

This draft decision constitutes a major milestone towards reaching the SDG 3.8 of reaching universal health coverage & access to quality essential health-care services for all by endorsing two key targets to be achieved in the field of eye care by 2030:

- a 40 percent increase in effective coverage of refractive error by 2030, and
- a 30 percent increase in effective coverage of cataract surgery by 2030.

In view of the crucial importance of eye health throughout the whole life cycle for making universal health coverage a reality, for the well-being of every human being and last but not least also for the productivity of our economies, the EU fully supports these targets and calls on the WHO to include them in the frameworks used to monitor the Universal Health Coverage. We encourage all Member States and Stakeholders to implement national action plans that ensure that these aims will be really met in time.

Investing in eye care, including prevention, early detection, treatment and rehabilitation services, trained eye care service providers; and integration of eye care services into health systems will create benefits that are more than ten times larger than as the investments made in this sector.