European Union

Statement

WHO

74th World Health Assembly
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WHA74 - Item 17.3, 18 WHO's work in health emergencies, Mental health preparedness for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic

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Geneva, 25 May 2021

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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 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 EU and its member states commend the dedicated and tireless work of the WHO health emergencies staff. The WHO's normative role and hands-on work, including in high-risk areas and humanitarian contexts, as the lead agency for the Global Health Cluster, and the enhanced coordination efforts over the past years have shown that WHO leverages results through enhanced collaboration, not only among UN agencies but also with non - state actors.

Nonetheless, it is important that the WHO should always intervene in line with its technical mandate and in complementarity to other, best placed, UN agencies

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

and non-state actors that have the capacities and the mandate to deliver frontline work in operational settings, such as dealing with supply chains, logistics or humanitarian assistance.

Cooperation across the GPW pillars is also a key strength for effective preparedness and response. We welcome the work done by WHO in the area of mental health resulting in the updated Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030. This Plan is an essential tool for strengthening mental health and psychosocial support and preparedness at country level, for current and future public health emergencies.

Chair,

The EU welcomes the ongoing efforts made by the IOAC to produce recommendations which help WHO become a key performant in health emergencies and urges WHO Secretariat to implement the recommendations.

It is also time for all Members States to reflect on how we can ensure more flexible, predictable and sustainable funding to allow the WHE programme to deliver swiftly and professionally, including with regard to the performance of its staff, adequate enabling functions, and a well-functioning WHE Contingency Fund. The technical capacity and the swift operational responses are first and foremost needed at country level. We should all work avoid that chronic underfunded activities and lack of human resources, result in severe consequences for the security, safety, mental health and well-being of the WHO staff and frontline health workers, working tirelessly in over 50 health emergencies all over the world.

Chair,

Regarding the need to materialize our collective ambition to strengthen WHO, the EU remains a dedicated leader that will continue to uphold its full support to

allow WHO to play its fundamental role in preparing and responding to health emergencies. This was made clear – again – when the Council of the EU unanimously adopted Council Conclusions on the EU's role in strengthening the WHO last November.

The EU appreciates the willingness of the WHO to engage in innovative initiatives responding to new global health security needs, such as the establishment of the Biohub, the One Health High Level Expert Panel and the WHO Hub for Epidemic and Pandemic Intelligence. We look forward to learning more about these initiatives, also stressing the need to avoid duplication of structures in order to sustain efficient and effective work streams. In general, we believe that WHO could benefit from a clear policy to allow oversight by its governing bodies when launching new initiatives. The WHO European Region has a policy on geographical dispersed offices that could serve as an example in this regard.

We welcome the fruitful negotiations on the WHO strengthening Resolution put for adoption at this WHA and we stand ready to constructively engage in the work of the open ended working group.

To conclude, we wish to seek advice from the WHO on the possibilities to establish a Standing Committee for Emergencies. And the EU stands ready to engage in such a discussion.