

European Union

Statement

WHO

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

WHA74 - Items 22, 23: Social determinants of health, WHO global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system within a national multisectoral response to address interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children

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Geneva, 31 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 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.

We thank the secretariat for their report and Peru for leading the resolution on social determinants of health, which the EU is proud to co-sponsor. COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of addressing underlying inequities and inequalities. Lockdowns, social isolation, physical distancing, school closures,

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

dealing with access and exposure to online environments in the case of online schooling, and other measures are disproportionately affecting the poorest, most vulnerable and those at high risk of fragility. This is particularly the case for women and children exposed to gender-based violence or honour related violence and children exposed to violence and abuse.

Social determinants, particularly in this pandemic and subsequent post-pandemic period, have and will have a strong impact on various elements of risk, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities, especially on exposure, capacity, intersectionality, accessibility, and thus on human health and related health inequalities throughout life. Addressing social determinants of health is crucial for improving health and reducing these disparities.

We welcome the work to be initiated by this resolution, but effective action at country level will require the efforts of Member States, UN organisations, as well as multi-sectoral collaboration across the UN system.

Chair,

Interpersonal violence, especially against women, girls, and children, is a key determinant of health and an obstacle to health equity. Interpersonal violence against women and girls is often rooted in gender inequality, and we must address this key driver. We must tackle sexual and gender based violence in particular. This can only be done with multi-sectoral action through a rights based and participative approach as we work towards achieving the Sustainable

Development Goals, particularly Goal 5 to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The pandemic has had both direct and indirect effects on people's health and well-being. COVID-19 itself, and the public health and social measures adopted by many countries in response, including lockdowns and school closures have considerably increased the risk of domestic violence. This will have devastating short, medium and long term consequences for women and children, especially for the most vulnerable, with girls increasingly exposed to the risk of female genital mutilation and forced marriage. In light of this, it is vital to limit adoption of measures regarding the criteria of necessity and proportionality to risk. We must support women, girls and children and their physical and mental health and well-being, including through psychosocial support.

In the face of these realities, we welcome the adoption of this resolution, and are happy to co-sponsor it. This resolution builds upon other resolutions such as 75/157 on women and girls and the response to the coronavirus disease, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly. However this alone is not enough – we must promote health equity in all national policies, and work towards gender equality, women's and children's empowerment and an end to interpersonal violence, especially against women, girls, and children.

Thank you