

Portugal
World Health Organization
75th Session of the World Health Assembly
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Item 14.1 Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the
General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases
(continued)

Chair,

Excellences,

I have the honour to address the 75th World Health Assembly on behalf of Portugal. We align ourselves with the previous statement made by the European Union.

Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) have been a global epidemic long before the pandemic. The onset of COVID-19 has shifted health priorities and exacerbated the impact of this silent plague, bringing to light an aggravated syndemic that we now must face.

People living with NCDs are more prone to develop severe COVID-19 complications; patients who recover are more likely to develop NCDs and, disruptions in treatment and diagnosis during the pandemic result in a longer-term demand for later-stage NCDs, further overstressing health systems.

Chair,

We commend the work of the secretariat on the NCD implementation road map, particularly the recognition that mental disorders and other mental health conditions contribute to the high global NCD burden, and note worryingly that mental disorders, other mental health conditions and neurological disorders are one of the leading causes of premature death and disability globally. We have been reminded of the need for the world to revisit its attention to mental health and to further acknowledge its importance for the well-being of individuals. It has been overlooked for too long and was an under- addressed challenge before this pandemic.

To make matters worse, estimates indicate a minimum 25% increase in the prevalence of common conditions such as depression and anxiety, with women and young people being the most affected. Stigma, discrimination,

violence, and coercion around mental health are still major problems everywhere. The pandemic exacerbated the global mental health emergency and reminded us that these conditions are not only someone else's problem, but that we are all potential users of mental health services.

In this regard, we would like to commend WHO's ongoing work on its Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030, a global plan designed to provide support for national action. We would like to signal the alignment of Portugal with this plan and its objectives, particularly a more effective leadership, and governance for mental health; the provision of comprehensive, integrated mental health and social care services in community-based settings; the implementation of strategies for health promotion and disease prevention; and strengthened information systems, evidence and research. As an example of the first objective, we have recently established a National Mental Health Policy Coordination Structure and reviewed our Mental Health legislation aiming to strengthen our governance model, while also giving a strong MH Rights focus. This aligns with the cause we have been championing in the last years, a paradigm shift with a human rights based approach in mental health. In this process, I am proud to say that we have been directly supporting and commend the WHO QualityRights initiative.

Chair,

Mental health conditions are aggravated in vulnerable and key populations.

We recognize the responsibility to strengthen support for mental health, an urgent need dictated not only by the historical lack of investment on the area, but also a very significant increase in the incidence of acute conditions, all stemming from the psychological suffering caused by the stressful past years and, to some extent by the measures implemented to tackle it.

Thank you.

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