

Portugal
World Health Organization
75th Session of the World Health Assembly
(22 - 28 May 2022)

General Discussion “Health for peace, peace for health”

Director-General of the World Health Organization,
President of the World Health Assembly,
Distinguished Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is an undeniable interdependence between health and peace.

As set forth in the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, peace is one of the fundamental conditions and resources for health.

Times of conflict cause social and economic disruption and extend far beyond the immediate casualties. Health systems struggle to keep providing the best access to health to everyone, both on the conflict ground and in the host countries affected by displacements.

As we stand here today, there are millions of people experiencing the consequences of war, namely in Ukraine. Portugal condemns the military aggression and stands with Ukraine and its people. We will continue to do everything to provide the necessary assistance and support, as we have been doing so far, including donating medicines and medical countermeasures, receiving patients and welcoming refugees.

Conflicts should be avoided as they will always impact negatively on the lives of the people. Moreover, healthcare workers and facilities must never be a target.

We recall one of the basic principles to the happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples laid down in the WHO Constitution after the II World War. It declares that – and I quote – “the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States” – end of quote.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We shall never forget why we are here. Health is our main objective. In this regard, our approach should move from working in conflicts to working on conflicts, by designing health projects in such a way to achieve both health and peace outcomes.

More than ever, we shall take into consideration the lessons learned from the past 2 years, one of which is the importance of global solidarity.

Health should be handled as a bridge for peace. After all, it is the uniting factor and shared aspiration of all people, regardless of their situation.

I thank you.