



European Union

Statement

WHO

77th World Health Assembly

(27 May – 1 June 2024)

Item 3 – Address by the Director-General

Geneva, 27 May 2024

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EU Statement

Chair,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I am delivering this statement on behalf of the EU and its 27 Member States.

The candidate countries North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova* and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

We express our gratitude to the Director General for his comprehensive report, and his unwavering dedication to addressing global health challenges. We also extend our appreciation to WHO staff in the country and regional offices as well as headquarters for their vital work in fulfilling the right to the highest attainable standard of health for all, including through the provision of leadership, direction and coordination on matters critical to health; setting norms and standards for quality and evidence based health care policy and practice; and, providing technical support for quality health care delivery including in humanitarian settings.

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

The European Union and its Member States remain committed to working hand in hand with the WHO to achieve SDG 3 and promote health and well-being for all.

We take great pride in and commend the progress we have made together at improving health outcomes globally, including for example the reduction of maternal mortality by one third since 2000, and the halving of AIDS related deaths since 2010. However, progress towards SDG 3 has stalled. Millions of people are still left behind as inequities within and between countries are increasing. In parallel, as we are working to regain valuable ground lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of people globally are experiencing the devastating impact of ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises on their lives and health.

We deplore the increasing number of manmade health emergencies. The EU reiterates its commitment to work with partners to end the crisis in Gaza without delay and implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 2728, including through reaching an immediate ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages. We also call for an end to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as well as all conflicts, including those in Sudan, Ethiopia, and the DRC. We urge all parties to fulfill their obligations under international law and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians, health workers and health facilities, in accordance with international humanitarian law, is a vital priority.

In addition, we are already and will increasingly be facing the disastrous impact of climate change that jeopardizes decades of progress in global health, threatens the achievement of agenda 2030 and has severe consequences on health and health systems. Last year was the warmest year on record globally.

To respond effectively to these multiple crises, we will need much faster, evidence-based, and more coherent action and collaboration at all levels than has been the case in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that halfhearted

measures won't get us far. This sense of urgency therefore also needs to be reflected in the policies proposed by WHO. It is essential that the Organization continues to play a central and coordinating role, promoting coherent and inclusive collaboration between international actors for an effective international system, leaving nobody and no region of the world behind.

In the same spirit, for more than two years, we have all devoted considerable time and resources to improve the global prevention, preparedness and response to future pandemics. We have collectively worked to break the cycle of panic and neglect, and to build a safer future. The EU has been a constructive and flexible partner throughout the negotiations. But the timeframe has proven too short to arrive at an outcome. Therefore, we would welcome a consensual decision at this WHA on a timeframe with effective modalities for the future negotiations towards a pandemic agreement that is meaningful, equitable and ratifiable, as well as the successful conclusion of the revision of the IHR.

Dr Tedros, the adoption of the 14th General Programme of Work is an [other] important milestone in guiding the work of the Organization to protect, provide and promote the highest attainable standard of health and well-being for all leaving no-one behind. We welcome the strong impetus to address the root causes of ill health, including climate change and environmental factors, as well as economic, social, cultural and commercial determinants. We also commend the ambition to support health workforce and address critical gaps in a comprehensive manner, acknowledging that health workers are the backbone of our health systems. The WHO Academy is set to play a key role regarding this ambition. / We commend the WHO's leadership role in raising awareness about the need to build climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems, and call on WHO to continue its efforts to promote the One Health approach.

The health workforce, out of which approximately 75% are women in the European region, form the backbone of our national health systems. We commend the ambition to address the critical gaps, including education and skills

development for which the WHO Academy is set to play a key role, addressing gender inequities, recruitment, working conditions and retention. At a global level, especially during the year where we evaluate the impact of the WHO Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel, we want to emphasize the importance of a fair, ethical and sustainable management of international health workforce migration and, as per the Code of Practice promote, international cooperation in order to mitigate the negative effects and maximize the positive effects across health systems.

Remaining concerned by persistent funding gaps for several health priorities such as health promotion, prevention and control of NCDs or neglected tropical diseases, we call for increased sustainable funding of the GPW14 and welcome WHO's continued efforts to that effect. The first Investment Round will be an important tool to raise adequate funding in a more predictable, transparent and coordinated manner that will contribute to an independent and empowered WHO that we all need.

Thank you.