



European Union

Statement

WHO

78th World Health Assembly

(19 May – 27 May 2025)

Item 11.1 – Governance Reform

Geneva, 20 May 2025

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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 Türkiye, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina* and Georgia as well as Armenia align themselves with this statement.

We acknowledge the recent progress made in strengthening the governance of the World Health Organization. The efforts of the Working Group on Sustainable Financing, the Agile Member State Task Group, and past Executive Board (EB) chairs have contributed meaningfully to this advancement. Strong, transparent, accountable and effective governance remains fundamental to WHO's role in leading global health efforts.

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

We see opportunities to further enhance the work of the governing bodies. Strengthening the EB's strategic oversight of WHO's work will help ensure effective implementation. This calls for a more agile and responsive approach, including interactive discussions and, when appropriate, convening between regular sessions, potentially through virtual or informal means especially in challenging times.

In addition, the development, costing and adoption of resolutions warrants further reflection and requires reform. Resolutions have a significant influence on both the programme of work and budget. To support more effective and efficient decision-making, it is important to ensure greater clarity on how resolutions are developed, limiting the number of additional mandates and consider how they align with the General Programme of Work and their implications for resources. This includes a collective commitment by Member States to ensure strategic focus and discipline when submitting new proposals. A more structured and transparent process for resolution need and development based on clear criteria such as value-added, impact, equity, feasibility, and alignment with strategic priorities could support this objective. This could be initiated by the EB or PBAC soon.

We emphasise the importance of accountability and independent oversight and strongly believe that an independent body, selected and appointed by the EB, should investigate allegations against the Director-General. We are in the eleventh hour and we count on Member States collective support in finalizing this key aspect of governance reform at the WHA.

We also emphasize the need for specific mechanisms which provide detailed, ongoing oversight over the WHO's restructuring and its focus on core priorities, enhancing the organisations' accountability in the new landscape.

As the global health landscape continues to evolve, it remains vital that WHO retains its central role. Its constitutional mandate to act as the directing and coordinating authority on international health is crucial and should be fully reflected in the work and decisions of its governing bodies.

We also welcome the preservation and strengthening of accountability functions through the prioritization exercise, and their anchoring in the new WHO structure by being directly attached to the DG's office.

The EU views these proposals as part of a continuous improvement process, aiming to improve accountability and support more effective and impactful engagement by Member States in guiding WHO's work.

Thank you.