

“Together for science” full joint statement

Agenda item 15.2 Well-being and Health Promotion

Excellencies, I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of a cross-regional group of 61 Member States including Albania, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Brazil, Belgium, Benin, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Grenada, Guyana, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Seychelles, Slovenia, Spain, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, UK, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vanuatu and my own country of Colombia.

The theme for World Health Day this year, “Together for health. Stand with science” is a powerful reminder of the role and importance of the World Health Organization, and one integral to the topic of well-being and health promotion.

Since the creation of the World Health Organization in 1948, scientific advances and multilateral cooperation have revolutionized health outcomes around the world, from eliminating smallpox to significantly reducing maternal mortality rates.

The World Health Organization sits at the center of global health and plays a powerful role generating evidence and producing norms and standards that inform care, promote healthier outcomes, and save lives worldwide.

We recognize the importance of well-being and health promotion to public health, and that these efforts must include all actors in society, including through community-led solutions. Health systems must support people with evidence-based care that advances their health, human rights, and dignity at every stage of their life.

The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health includes the right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services. Yet this care remains out of reach for millions.

Evidence shows that sexual and reproductive health needs begin early and evolve through adulthood and older age. Around the world, 374 million men and women contract one of the four main STIs each year; 1 in 6 people experience infertility in their lifetime; 1 in 3 women are subjected to physical or sexual violence; and 1.1 billion women of reproductive age globally need family planning.

Evidence also shows that when women and girls have agency over their bodies and reproductive choices, we see health benefits such as reduced rates of unintended

pregnancy, maternal mortality and morbidity, newborn mortality, and new STIs. Investing in and ensuring access to available, accessible, acceptable, affordable and quality sexual and reproductive health services ensures better health outcomes and improved well-being. This enables girls to stay in school, increases women's participation in the workforce, advances the Sustainable Development Goals, and reduces poverty.

Evidence shows that protecting and promoting human rights for all is an essential part of improving well-being and fulfilling the WHO's mandate of ensuring the highest attainable standard of health for all.

This Assembly marks the start of a time of transition, with the global health architecture reform conversations starting in earnest and a new Director General taking office next year. It is more important than ever that WHO and Member States ensure science and evidence remain the heart of this organization. Science keeps us accountable to facts and to the people we represent and serve; acting on the basis of evidence reinforces WHO's credibility at a time of pressure.

With science at its core, we can protect and strengthen this organization and the wider global health architecture. Through cooperation, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to evidence-based solutions, we can ensure health, well-being, and dignity for all.