



European Union

Statement

79th World Health Assembly
(18-23 May 2026)

Item 14.1 – WHO’s work in health emergencies

Geneva, 19 May 2026

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EU Statement

Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

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

We remain alarmed by the multitude of health emergencies across the world. Ten years ago, resolution 2286 on the protection of medical care in conflict was adopted. We condemn in the strongest terms all deliberate attacks on civilians, healthcare and aid workers. Parties to an armed conflict are required to facilitate the functioning of medical establishments and protect them from harm. Attacks should at all times be investigated.

We commend WHO and its staff for their tireless efforts to save lives in extreme conditions. The ten years of WHO Health Emergencies Programme have been a success and it is in our common interest to ensure the functioning of the Programme through flexible and predictable funding. It is also imperative that actors within the global health architecture and the Humanitarian Health Cluster assess their roles in health emergency response.

We express our deep concern regarding the rapid spread of the Ebola Virus Disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, noting that there are currently no approved Bundibugyo virus-specific therapeutics or vaccines. We commend the Director-General's decision to declare a PHEIC in line with International Health Regulations, and welcome the swift release of funds from the Contingency Fund for Emergencies, enabling an immediate response, including epidemiological surveillance, contact tracing, and the strengthening of laboratory capacity. The EU stands ready, as in previous outbreaks, to support the work of WHO and the Africa CDC in the coordination and delivery of urgent containment and response measures. Deployments by the EU Health Task Force are already planned.

Mr Chair,

resilient health systems, including emergency services and early detection are at the core of sustained country level preparedness and readiness, including in communities. Intersectoral cooperation and the One Health approach are essential for prevention.

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

We highly appreciate the work of the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence. Surveillance and information sharing at local, national, regional and global levels is critical to preventing the spread of disease and to saving lives. We underscore the importance of support on the ground, including through emergency medical evacuations and Emergency Medical Teams and Public Health Teams facilitated by the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network. This is a shared effort, as we have seen also with the Hanta virus outbreak.

The EU and its Member States support WHO in fulfilling its constitutional mandate to strengthen emergency prevention, preparedness and response globally, and to protect the health, wellbeing and dignity of all people.