European Union
Statement

WHO
148th Session of the Executive Board
(18-26 January 2021)

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Item 12. Immunization Agenda 2030

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Geneva, 23 January 2021
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EU Statement

Chair,
Director General,
Excellencies,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia align themselves with this statement.

We thank the Secretariat for advancing the operational elements of Immunisation Agenda 2030. Immunisation as a corner stone of primary health care is one of the most cost-effective measures for primary prevention of infectious diseases and must be maintained even through pandemics, in order to save lives.

Chair, 

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Immunisation Agenda 2030 will guide our work on immunisation over the next decade, and should be country focused and country-led, with appropriate support from global health actors. Immunisation against COVID-19 will be central in ending this pandemic, and as such we should consider if Immunisation Agenda 2030 needs to be complemented to reflect this important element. Beyond COVID-19, we also encourage the Secretariat to make proposals on mechanisms to ensure equitable access to vaccines against pandemic pathogens, potentially building upon the existing PIP Framework.

Chair,

We have seen remarkable scientific progress, with vaccines against COVID-19 now in use one year after this virus was first identified. This unprecedented research and innovation is critical to vaccine take up, but we have also seen disinformation and misinformation spread about vaccines. We encourage WHO to continue countering false information and to continue providing evidence based, reliable information to Member States and the public.

We are now beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, as some Member States have begun vaccinating against COVID-19. However, as the Director General has reminded us many times – “no one is safe, until everyone is safe,” and this progress has not been equal across and within countries. WHO Member States have recognised the role of extensive immunisation against COVID-19 as a global public good for health, and we now need to make this a reality by ensuring equitable access to quality, safe, effective vaccines, for all.

The ACT – Accelerator, which the EU co-hosts, and the COVAX Facility are critical in ensuring this equitable access and that no one is left behind. We call on Member States to support WHO and the COVAX Facility so that this
pandemic is brought to an end. The European Union and its Member States have committed over eight hundred and sixty million euro in funding to the COVAX Facility to date, and we are proud to express our solidarity and joint action on vaccine sharing.

We also welcome the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer, which will help vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crises and at risk of exclusion from regular vaccination campaigns. However, the allocation criteria and mechanism must be clearly defined and the buffer used only for humanitarian purposes. We also call for clear and transparent monitoring of all vaccines administered, to ensure that gaps can be addressed.

Thank you.