European Union
Statement

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

Item 14-1: COVID-19 Response

18 January 2021
EU Statement

Chair,

I speak on behalf the EU and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania* as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

WHA Resolution 73.1 constituted the first joint response by the WHO’s membership to COVID-19. It showed that multilateralism, international cooperation and solidarity work and are the most adequate answer facing a pandemic. We welcome the progress made by the Secretariat and Member States in the implementation of the resolution. Proactive follow-up remains key to guide our responses—WHO Secretariat and Member States alike.

==ACT-A==

For the global response, equitable access, rapid development and fair deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics as well as the strengthening of health systems for their deployment are essential.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
In partnership with WHO, the EU has been playing a central role in setting up, funding and co-hosting ACT-A as the central mechanism to achieve these goals. We support the full realisation of ACT-A, including its vaccines pillar COVAX, which we support both via the AMC and as a self-financing participant, so that all who need COVID-19 vaccines have access to them.

To ensure ACT-A’s success, we encourage support of all member states and stakeholders. We also need to address the funding gap as well as the gap in vaccination between countries. Vaccine donations are also to play a key role.

The EU will continue to be a reliable partner and champion for resilient health systems and universal health coverage, the One Health approach at all levels, and the objectives of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All to reach the SDGs and to strengthen cooperation among health actors.

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Chair,

WHO is an evidence and science-based organization for global health. In this spirit, the resolution asked for an investigation of the source of the virus. Understanding the origin will enable us to better control and respond to this pandemic and future health threats.

We welcome that the international expert team was finally allowed to travel to China to start their investigation in cooperation with Chinese counterparts. We attach great importance to this investigation, which requires transparency, access
to locations and data, and full cooperation, and we request to be regularly briefed on progress.

==Genome sequencing and data sharing==

Given the danger posed by emerging mutations of the virus, we underline the importance of sharing of genetic sequence data. We thank the UK, South Africa and other countries for sharing insights and data quickly and welcome WHO’s increased efforts to expand scientific collaboration.

Distinguished delegates,

2020 was a year of doom. We all hope that that 2021 will be a year of hope. However, the pandemic is far from over. We all must continue working hard nationally, regionally and globally through multilateral cooperation, trust and solidarity. With the help of the evaluation processes currently underway, we also need to learn from our mistakes and make bold moves to better prepare for, and respond to, future pandemics—even whilst combatting and recovering from the current one.