European Union
Statement

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

Item 2: Report by the Director General

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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.

The EU and its Member States welcome the global coordination, commitment and leadership of WHO, especially in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its action has been a safeguard for the most vulnerable populations, addressing gender and health inequalities, ensuring access to essential health services, and decreasing pandemic-related morbidity and mortality. We encourage WHO to continue applying a transparent, accountable approach to its action.

We thank the DG’s for his report and remain fully committed to continue collaborating with WHO and Regional Office supporting WHO in its role as the leading global health agency now and beyond the current pandemic.

* The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
A year into the pandemic we have learned that collaboration, resolve and commitment on a global scale delivers results. We praise all singular and collective actors, that contributed to the unprecedentedly fast discovery of effective vaccines as well as the work to provide equitable access to vaccines and other necessary commodities. It remains crucial that no one is left behind, especially in fragile, low-resourced settings and among populations who might be left out from regular vaccination campaigns. We need to make the same progress in treatments and clinical trials.

The EU and its Member States as “Team Europe” have stepped up by contributing to the ACT Accelerator and joined the “COVAX Facility”, to promote equitable and affordable access to COVID-19 tools and immunization against COVID-19 as a good global public good.

Chair,

An effective, transparent and science-based investigation on the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 is paramount and can provide us with clues to respond to this and prevent future pandemics. Understanding that this endeavor may not be concluded immediately, we look forward for regular, in-depth updates on the progress of the investigation.

We reiterate our support for the work of the Independent Panel, IHR Review Committee and IOAC. We look forward to their recommendations to be considered in an inclusive process, involving all member states, in developing a resolution on strengthening WHO and global preparedness, facilitated by the EU.
The pandemic has made clear – once again - the urgent need to invest in and create resilient health systems. With the goal of universal health coverage and other health SDGs, we express concern about the growing gaps, inequities and worsened health outcomes during the past year, particularly in sexual and reproductive health and NCD’s, including cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and mental health conditions.

To contribute to enhanced global health security, the EU has taken action towards building a European Health Union. We will improve EU’s health security framework, reinforce crisis preparedness, strengthen the ECDC and EMA, and consider the establishment of an EU Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA). We will work together in close collaboration with WHO and regional office.

Today, we all are facing the same challenges. The EU and its MSs will continue to be a driving force for multilateralism in addressing them and learn our lessons to be better prepared.