

UKRAINE

Statement by Maksym Stepanov, Minister of Health of Ukraine, head of the delegation of Ukraine at the 70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (14-15 September 2020)

**Honourable President of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe,
Distinguished Director-General and Regional Director for Europe,
Excellencies, Colleagues,
Fellow delegates,**

I am delighted to have the opportunity along with my fellow Ukrainian delegates to attend the 70th meeting of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. Ukraine is and will always be a strong supporter of the WHO and the vitally important work it carries out to improve and also to save the lives of citizens from every corner of the globe in its relentless efforts to improve global healthcare in its broadest sense.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder to all of us gathered here of the importance of the WHO in coordinating efforts to fight cross border health risks, providing essential advice and expertise particularly to countries that have not faced having to manage a pandemic on this scale.

Our response to this pandemic has been developed in full accordance with the WHO principles, strategies, and recommendations. We developed our protocol "Provision of medical care for the treatment of coronavirus disease (COVID-19)" in line with these guidelines and we have national protocols to deal with suppression of transmission including measures such as enhanced restrictions in regions of high incidence and strict social distancing protocols across all of Ukrainian society. Our experience is, I am sure, the same as many delegations. This virus requires constant monitoring, improvements in our epidemiological capacities, training for our medical staff and regular review of protocols and practices. I am confident that during this meeting we can all learn from our shared experience protecting all our citizens from this disease. As we all anxiously await the development of a safe and effective vaccine, Ukraine will continue to work in tandem with our WHO colleagues, all relevant international agencies and partner countries on the containment of the virus, improvements in treatments for affected patients and also essentially the international effort to develop a vaccine. Ukraine is committed to a multi-lateral approach and availability of a vaccine swiftly and equitably for all countries.

We recognise the imperative in a modern democratic state to have an equally modern and effective healthcare system that provides access equally for all citizens to all levels of healthcare and espouses the principle of preventative medicine. Despite the challenges posed

by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health is prioritising healthcare reform at all levels. Much has already been achieved but we have a long way to go. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the WHO Regional office for Europe and Dr. Kluge for the high-level of support and cooperation in this regard. I intend that our ongoing reform strategy will be based on international best practices and fully in line with WHO recommended standards. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all our international partners who have offered advice and tangible support in the development of this strategy. COVID-19 has in some way been a catalyst for reform. We have greatly increased our epidemiological laboratory capacity, developed new procedures for hygiene and sanitation procedures in all medical institutions etc. I hope at the 71st Regional meeting to report on major progress in our commitment to build a first-class healthcare system.

In conclusion let me say that Ukraine faces many challenges due to the ongoing Russia`s armed aggression against Ukraine and occupation of parts of the territory of Ukraine in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea , the city of Sevastopol and Donbas . This has crippling economic, social, and importantly healthcare effects. Unfortunately, the ongoing Russian armed aggression makes it impossible for the Ukrainian side to provide assistance and basic health services to the population in the occupied territories. This has been exacerbated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite current challenges Ukraine pledges its full support for the WHO strengthened efforts in helping countries to fight COVID-19 . We are committed to engage meaningfully in this work

I thank you.