

## Address by President Charles Michel at the World Health summit

Ladies and Gentlemen, Director-General of the WHO, my dear friend Dr Tedros.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you today, even if it is virtually.

First, I would like to pay tribute to all Ukrainian health professionals. You are working in absolutely horrific war conditions. You are working bravely to save lives and, as far as possible, to try to alleviate human suffering. I would like to say to you now that to us, you are heroes. Our respect for you is immense.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends,

COVID-19 has moved public health — and international cooperation — high up on the agenda, and quite rightly so. Because health is closely related to other public policies, such as climate change, the environment, trade, the economy, and social cohesion.

Our health, as we well know, is directly linked to the health of our ecosystems and, more broadly, to the health of our planet. We must fully grasp these links if we are to rise to the most urgent challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance, new pandemics that might arise, or food security. That is why I firmly believe that we must adopt this 'One Health' approach. The One Health approach is not a luxury. On the contrary, it is a *sine qua non* for the future of world health.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a terrible blow to health services the world over. It has also halted two decades of previously uninterrupted progress towards universal health coverage. It is a matter of urgency to reverse this trend by taking concerted action. We fully share the United Nations' Common Agenda which aims to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including on health.

In our international partnerships, the European Union gives priority to strengthening health systems and to universal health coverage. We are fully determined to work tirelessly to leave no-one behind. Everyone must have, and should have access to quality healthcare without financial barriers and without the place in which they live posing an obstacle.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is, of course, at the centre of our international health system. It is the steering and coordinating authority for tackling global health challenges. Next year, you will be celebrating your 75th anniversary. The European Union is determined to play a prominent role in an inclusive process to strengthen the WHO. Especially as regards preparedness for health emergencies and the response to them. That is why not long ago, together with Dr Tedros, we launched the idea of an international treaty on pandemics.

This binding international treaty on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response is currently under negotiation. It will, I hope, include the amendments to the International Health Regulations. I also hope that equity, solidarity, greater transparency and closer coordination will be the foundation of this future treaty. Of course, we know that substantial investments will be necessary to ensure that it is effective and credible. And that includes through technical assistance and by strengthening the capacities of developing countries.

Beyond COVID, the EU is fully committed to health matters across the globe. We are currently updating our Global Health Strategy. We want to strengthen global health systems and tackle health inequalities to move towards universal health coverage. This includes working to build effective multilateral institutions and to develop strategic partnerships with other regions of the world.

Global health is also one of the G7 and G20 leaders' priorities. In this respect, I would like to welcome the launch of the Financial Intermediary Fund for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. And we invite potential donors to join this effort.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Several months ago, after much diplomatic effort, we reached a compromise on vaccine intellectual property rights. We have struck a balance between intellectual property, scientific innovation and universal access to technology. I welcome this agreement because it will ensure that countries without any production capacity will not face any obstacles or legal uncertainties when importing COVID-19 vaccines.

The pandemic has highlighted the challenges of ensuring equitable access to vaccines. This is why there is such an urgent need to increase local vaccine production, especially in developing countries. That is why the European Union, with the support of financial institutions, has committed to raise over EUR 1 billion. One billion euros to promote local production and improve access to vaccines, medicines and technology in Africa. Technology transfer and support for regional production hubs are an essential part of the programme.

Together with our African partners, we are also building the continent's first vaccine production facilities in Rwanda and Senegal, for example. And other facilities will be built in Ghana, South Africa and elsewhere on the continent. Vaccines made in Africa, for Africa, with world-class technology.

In the summer, we also launched a new EU-Latin America and Caribbean partnership on local manufacturing of vaccines and medicines in this part of the world. This is an opportunity to strengthen public health, stimulate growth and create decent jobs, while fostering innovation in the private sector.

Public health must never again be allowed to slip down the agenda of global challenges. Our health is our life. It is all of our lives. And we must treat it with the necessary respect and collective commitment. That is why we are all here today to strive for a fairer and healthier world. Thank you for your attention and I wish you well in your endeavours.

**Press office - General Secretariat of the Council**

Rue de la Loi 175 - B-1048 BRUSSELS - Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319

[press@consilium.europa.eu](mailto:press@consilium.europa.eu) - [www.consilium.europa.eu/press](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press)