

PLANETARY HEALTH & PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

STATEMENT ON SESSION 5 (B): IMPROVING ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH IN THE CONTEXT OF HEALTH 2020 AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Human health is fully dependent on natural systems, which underpin the most essential services, such as the provision of clean air and water, nutritious food, stable climates, and energy. Underlying determinants of health inequity and environmental change overlap substantially. *Climate change* and the significant issues challenging the preservation of the Earth's environment must be addressed with high priority, in humanity's most vital interest and for the sake of the present and future generations.

Planetary health addresses the individual and public health, while paying judicious attention to the natural systems that define the safe environmental limits within which humanity can flourish. We recognize, therefore, planetary health as fundamental for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2017 Ostrava Declaration called for: “*Building environmental sustainability of health systems, and reducing their environmental impacts.*” Health systems can achieve a triple win in this regard by: protecting the health of staff and patients; protecting the environment, and; saving financial resources at the same time.

Primary health care is a pillar for sustainable health systems, building upon interprofessional collaboration to deliver a wide range of equitable, affordable and high-quality services. The workforce of the primary health care team considers it one of their core tasks to maintain and improve their patients' health, in a comprehensive sense. We understand that systematic work with health promotion has the potential to become a strategy for sustainable development –environmentally, socially and economically, and thus to play an important part in fulfilling the SDGs. As gatekeepers and coordinators for many health services, we safeguard people's health by reducing overdiagnosis and overtreatment in such ways as the rationalisation of the antibiotic use, assisting patients in prioritizing, and avoiding excessive and harmful investigations.

As professionals of the primary health care team:

- a) we can use **our position of having access to most of the population** to increase our patients' awareness of problems which threaten both individual health and the planet, promote behaviour changes, and empower them to live a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle;
- b) we can play an active role in **supporting the educational efforts** of general educational institutions, and in shaping training curricula and continuous professional development to include Planetary Health;
- c) we call upon Member States to develop and implement evidence-based, integrated policy solutions that address environmental sustainability together with human health and development goals.

Primary health care is the “green medicine”. We see the potential of being a significant social actor, addressing the need for improved societal conditions for good and equal health in ways that simultaneously promote sustainability.

Thank you for your attention.

NGOS SUPPORTING THIS STATEMENT

- **COTEC:** The European organization for all Occupational Therapists through their National Associations, with the purpose of ensuring an adequate number of high quality occupational therapy practitioners and services in Europe. COTEC is a regional group of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), representing more than 130.000 Occupational therapists.
- **Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe** is a non-profit coalition of hospitals, healthcare systems, healthcare professionals, local authorities, research/academic institutions, and environmental and health organisations. The organisation brings the voice of healthcare professionals to the European policy debate about key environmental issues and currently has 84 members in 26 countries of the WHO European Region, including 17 Member States of the European Union.
- **MMI:** Medicus Mundi International – Network Health for All is a network of organizations working in the field of international health cooperation and global health.
- **WFOT:** The World Federation of Occupational Therapists is the official representative of occupational therapy internationally, representing 480,000 occupational therapists worldwide. WFOT through its member associations and regional groups promotes and establishes high quality occupational therapy services and education programmes.
- **WONCA Europe:** The European regional network of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) represents more than 80,000 family doctors through their Member Organisations across Europe.