

Special session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe (10-11 May 2022)
Written Statement by ESTONIA

Honourable President of the Regional Committee, Regional Director,
Distinguished colleagues,

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

We thank the Regional Director for convening this special session at such a short notice, to discuss the health emergency in Ukraine and in the region, resulting from the war started by one of the Member States of our region - the Russian Federation.

We are all horrified by Russia's brutal military aggression in Ukraine targeted at civilians, at healthcare and humanitarian workers, grossly violating international and humanitarian law. The human suffering and loss of lives this war is causing, is unbearable and must be stopped.

Estonia condemns in the strongest possible terms the invasion and full-scale military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The destruction of the civilian structures and health facilities in Ukraine has left millions without shelter and access to basic services, including healthcare. The increasing number of civilians, including children, killed and wounded is recorded daily by the UN, with the recognition that the real figures stand significantly higher.

Millions have been forced to leave their homeland to find security in the neighbouring countries, to protect themselves and their children from the atrocities of war. A full-fledged war started by Russia has led to the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Over 17 million people inside and outside Ukraine now are in need of humanitarian assistance.

We simply cannot stand by - this human tragedy is happening in our courtyard - in the middle of Europe - at this very moment.

We commend the efforts of WHO and other international organisations to assist Ukraine and its people with humanitarian aid and medical supplies. At the same

time, we are deeply concerned that Russia has failed to grant safe access for this aid to reach those in need.

Estonia will continue to fully support Ukraine, this concerns both political and practical support, including humanitarian aid, and post-war reconstruction.

In Estonia, we have also welcomed many Ukrainian refugees, and we are prepared to make all the necessary efforts to offer them shelter, access to healthcare and psychosocial support, enabling them to live with dignity in our country.

The war is not only having a devastating effect on health of people in Ukraine, but its negative impacts are much wider, affecting the European Region and the globe. It has put health and social systems in the neighbouring countries under considerable pressure. Millions of people globally are on the brink of famine caused by food insecurity resulting from the war in Ukraine.

It is for these reasons, that we fully support the resolution put forward for adoption at this special session. Furthermore, Russian Federation or any other aggressor state that causes a grave health emergency and brutally attacks civilians and civilian structures should not be allowed to take part in the WHO decision making, until full respect to international law and human rights is restored.

Tanel Kiik

Minister of Health and Labour

- *End of the written statement* -