

## **Statement submitted by the United States and Canada**

### **WHO Regional Committee for Europe Special Session on the Health Situation in Ukraine**

**May 10, 2022**

The United States and Canada are submitting this statement, which is also joined by Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Peru, and Saint Lucia. We support the request by more than 40 members of the European region to convene this Special Session calling attention to the urgent crisis unfolding in Ukraine and its global and far-reaching consequences caused by Russia's aggression.

We join others in condemning Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war against Ukraine. The brutal attacks by Russia's military forces have displaced millions, destroyed critical health facilities including maternity and children's hospitals, and disrupted essential medical supply chains. The conflict is also depriving millions of safe and reliable access to essential health services leading to excess morbidity and mortality from health issues that only a few months ago were easily treated and prevented. At the same time, the displacement of millions of Ukrainians across international borders is placing significant strain on health systems in neighboring countries and across the region. While the extensive damage is just a few weeks in the making, we know the recovery will take years and the human cost of this will never be forgotten. This is a health emergency not born of a virus or the forces of nature. Rather this is a crisis of choice. While it is particularly significant to Europe, it concerns all of us, as Russia's war undermines our ongoing collective work to build the global health security architecture.

The damage from this senseless violence reaches far and wide, beyond the borders of Ukraine and the European region. The conflict is exacerbating a global food security crisis and related health emergencies, with estimates projecting that Russia's war against Ukraine could push up to 40 million more people around the world – including in our region – into food insecurity and poverty by the end of this year. This adds to already significant shocks and stresses from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, outbreaks of yellow fever and cholera, climate change, economic shocks, and the impacts of conflict and violent extremism.

We thank the WHO and other UN humanitarian agencies and partners who are working tirelessly to serve millions of Ukrainians, especially those forcibly displaced, with lifesaving supplies, equipment, and medicines. We recognize the important role that WHO's Regional Commissions can and should play in fostering regional and global cooperation on health emergencies and welcome the discussion today in the Special Session focused on what more can be done to address the worsening health crisis.

We welcome further discussion on this issue and its impacts on countries around the globe at the World Health Assembly, reaffirming WHO's critical health emergency and humanitarian work in Ukraine and countries impacted by other urgent health and humanitarian crises around the globe.

We thank our European Regional colleagues for convening us today on this topic of critical importance – with implications for all regions worldwide – and we look forward to our continued work together to address the health needs of the Ukrainian people and mitigate the far-reaching, negative health impacts of this conflict across the world.

Thank you.