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## Danish priorities in the work of the WHO Executive Board

### Overall Danish priorities

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Denmark strongly supports international cooperation on global health and the leading role of The World Health Organization (WHO), as the United Nations' specialized agency for health. As a Member of the Executive Board Denmark will work to support the continued development of WHO's work across its six core functions and to emphasize in particular WHO's normative role as a key pillar in the global health infrastructure.

The WHO plays a central role in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Denmark prioritizes the implementation of the 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13) and achieving its triple billion goals with particular emphasis on universal health coverage, reducing health inequalities, strengthening public health, and ensuring people-centered healthcare systems that are universal, equitable, sustainable, of high quality, and safe.

#### 1. Strengthening of WHO

##### The normative role of the WHO

For WHO to maintain a strong position, the organization must continuously strive to uphold its legitimacy and relevance. This calls for a clear emphasis on the core mandate. The normative role of WHO serves as the cornerstone of this mandate, and provides a solid foundation for the development of sustainable health systems in Member States. A key aspect of the normative work of WHO is effort to counter infodemics and false and misleading information. Denmark strongly supports WHO in working in a science-based manner and disseminating science-based facts and knowledge.

##### Cementing the WHO's leading role in the global health architecture

The global health architecture continues to suffer from fragmentation. This hinders an effective and coherent global response to health challenges and thus the attaining of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Denmark supports a strengthening of the WHO's leading role in a strong and coordinated global health infrastructure. Denmark supports the continued efforts to ensure an efficient, accountable and inclusive WHO able to strengthen its normative and technical functions and address the increasingly complex challenges of global health. This should be done in close cooperation with all relevant partners, including with international organizations, non-state actors and through increased coordination with the rest of the UN system

##### Strengthening preparedness and response mechanisms in global health emergencies

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that the world and the WHO were not sufficiently prepared for a global pandemic. The WHO was not provided with the necessary capacity and resources to respond to and prevent a global health emergency, such as COVID-19. At the same time, however, the pandemic has created political momentum to work for a strengthened WHO and further multilateral cooperation on health security and health emergencies. WHO is a vital leading partner in the global preparedness and response to health emergencies, and timely and focused preparedness and response to health emergencies. In this regard, Denmark strongly supports the ongoing work of ensuring an inclusive, ambitious process of strengthening the WHO with broad global support and strengthened global cooperation on health security and learning from the COVID-19 pandemic.

##### Full implementation of IHR

Another important part of strengthening global pandemic preparedness and response capacity is national compliance with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), including national responsibility for sharing information and data in a timely, transparent and evidence-based manner both between Member States and with the WHO.

### Sustainable financing

Through several successive reform processes, the effectiveness, agility, and transparency of WHO has improved. Denmark will continue to support the process of ensuring good governance, sound financial management, and an efficient, effective and accountable WHO. In this process a more sustainable financing of WHO is needed. The level of assessed contributions (ACs) has remained largely static while the proportion of voluntary contributions (VCs), often earmarked to specific areas or programmes, has increased along with the overall budget. This has resulted in some areas being chronically underfunded, including non-communicable diseases, emergency preparedness, and data and science functions. Denmark supports further work to achieve long-term financial sustainability, including by expanding the group of member states who provide long-term core support. Denmark's decision to double its voluntary core support to WHO should be seen in this perspective.

### **2. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**

NCDs affect people in all countries and across all ages. And the health issues that we fail to address today will place a great burden on future generations. NCDs constitute a large disease burden, not only for high-income countries, and is a driver of premature death, especially in low- and middle-income countries. The prevalence of NCDs also increases inequality in health as vulnerable and socially disadvantaged people tend to be more severely affected by NCD's than other groups in society. A focus on NCD's in humanitarian crisis is also needed, as the detection, care, and treatment is often neglected or disrupted in these circumstances.

### Mental health

The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a fundamental human right, including the right to a good mental health free of stigma and discrimination. Mental health is one of the most neglected areas of health, a tragic but crucial fact that we need to address as a matter of urgency. At the same time we see a large correlation between NCDs and mental health, which underlines the need for a multi-target approach in addressing mental health. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen that health emergencies can result in negative effects on mental health. We should use the current momentum to strengthen our efforts in mental health and well-being in the future.

### **3. Universal health coverage**

Ensuring equal access for all to safe healthcare services of high quality, including essential medicines and vaccines, remains a key priority. Treatment and care should be provided on the basis of individual needs and without distinction of gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition. Denmark will work to ensure that WHO promotes essential health preparedness and services and supports countries in developing resilient health systems, including the most vulnerable, as the main way towards achieving universal health coverage and health security.

### Primary Healthcare (PHC)

Strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC) will be crucial in achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC). In the strengthening of PHC we must focus on accessibility, equity, safety, quality, efficiency and affordability while also striving to deliver continuous, integrated services that are people-centred and gender-sensitive. The 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13) along with 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals should guide the work of WHO, and Denmark believes the development of resilient health care systems with strong primary health care (PHC) to be at the core of this work.

Not least, the primary healthcare sector can play an important role in the prevention and control of NCD's. The aim should be to ensure that as many services as possible, including early detection among high risk groups as well as individualized rehabilitation, treatment, and control, are managed in the primary health care sector, close to peoples' homes and everyday life.

### Vaccines and immunization

COVID-19 has underlined the importance of equal, global and rapid access to vaccines and of immunization, a key component of PHC and primary disease prevention. An important part of this work is an increased focus on addressing vaccine hesitancy and tackle misinformation through transparency and openness as well as strengthening childhood immunization programmes. As one of the founding members, the WHO is key in the COVAX Facility. Denmark continues to actively support and emphasize COVAX' role in ensuring global access to COVID-19 vaccines, just as Denmark has actively supported UNICEF in their important role in COVAX.

### Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Denmark applies human rights as a core value based on principles of non-discrimination, participation, transparency and accountability. Denmark will continue to push for a rights-based approach to all of the WHO's work and places strong emphasis on gender equality and the rights of women and girls and places sexual and reproductive health and rights as vital to improving

health for all at all ages. Denmark will work to ensure that WHO continues to strengthen its human rights and gender policies to remove barriers for accessing services and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

#### Reducing health inequalities

Inequalities in health exist across all income and educational levels and ages, both within individual countries and between countries and regions. Denmark will continue to advocate for a strong horizontal effort to reduce inequalities and achieve universal health coverage. Policies to strengthen primary healthcare and effectively addressing NCD's are instrumental in this regard. In this regard, Denmark will also work to strengthen the capacity of WHO to provide support to vulnerable countries and communities in building sustainable healthcare systems and equal access to healthcare for all.

#### **4. One Health approach**

##### Antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

Antimicrobial resistance is one of the greatest threats to global health today. Significant progress has been made at global policy level, but transforming policy into action remains a challenge. Denmark holds a long tradition in AMR mitigation and fully committed to the One Health approach. In 2018, Denmark initiated the establishment of the International Centre for Antimicrobial Resistance Solutions, ICARS. ICARS' works in a One Health perspective to develop context-specific, cost-effective and evidence-based solutions to support low- and middle-income countries in their work to mitigate AMR. Denmark will continue to support WHO's work on the AMR agenda, including through collaboration with ICARS.

##### Health, environment and climate change

Health, climate and the environment are closely interlinked and a healthy environment is vital for human health and development while climate change poses a threat to human health. To solve these interconnected challenges, Denmark strongly supports the One Health approach. Denmark will encourage WHO to provide knowledge and evidence on the health impact of climate change and environmental factors and to develop recommendations regarding environmentally sustainable and climate friendly practices in healthcare, such as sustainable hospitals and medical waste.