

**Statement by Slovenia**

**at the**

**Second Special Session of the World Health Assembly**

*Geneva, 29 September 2021*

Honourable chair, Director General, Excellencies, colleagues,

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement of the EU and its Member States, presented by our minister before.

Given the new facts, we are justifiably concerned that we are still a long way from overcoming the one of the greatest health crises in human history- the COVID 19 pandemic. While much better prepared for this wave, our health systems are challenged again in many ways. Having a strong primary health care is certainly an advantage, however the dual track approach after a certain period of time affects access to services, in particular those for chronic patients, mental health and prevention. The relocation of staff and the continued concern for sufficient capacity for the most severe cases of COVID-19 place a heavy burden on health systems and health professionals. We can see already now that this prolonged state of emergency contributes to widening gap of inequities in our populations. It is evident that investments, not only financial, will be needed to strengthen our response capacities and ensure better preparedness for such crises.

Even more worrying are the unjustified inequities in access to COVID-19 countermeasures. While this is most hard felt by the developing countries, we can witness already today that no one is immune to the consequences of inequity. We have seen admirable acts of solidarity, for example through ACT-A and COVAX, but this is clearly not enough. We should strive to find innovative ways of working together to respond to future crises at the global level better and faster.

Over the last almost two years, there has been a plethora of recommendations put forward by the WHO, Member States, and independent bodies, led by experts, and political leaders. Slovenia thanks them for their unwavering efforts and strong leadership. They have also pointed out, that there are serious gaps in the current global health architecture. To address them, we need to put equity and solidarity at the heart of our efforts.

We are convinced that we can do it better and that now we have the opportunity. We have a historic decision in front of us- to embark on a journey towards a new legally binding instrument against pandemics. We believe that this new instrument will allow us to address many aspects of pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, such as One Health, Sample Sharing, Health Emergency Health Workforce, Access to Countermeasures etc. Above all, it will allow us to institutionalise our commitment to Equity and Solidarity.

Slovenia welcomes this opportunity and invites other delegations to adopt this decision.

Thank you.