

Special session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe: summary and outcome



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The ongoing war in Ukraine and its impact on health conditions locally, as well as health matters regionally and beyond, were the focus of a special session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe today.

The virtual special session, moderated from WHO/Europe in Copenhagen, Denmark, was called by Ukraine and 42 other Member States, including all 27 European Union Member States.

WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge outlined WHO's efforts and commitment to support the people of Ukraine both at this time and in the long term.

The main focus of the special session was a draft resolution proposed by 38 Member States with 3 key requests:

After several countries offered remarks on the proposed resolution, a roll-call vote was taken. Of the 48 Member States present to vote, 43 voted in favour of adopting the resolution, 3 voted against, and 2 abstained. The resolution was therefore adopted by a large majority.

The outcome of the special session of the Regional Committee will now be formally conveyed to the WHO Director-General. As directed by the resolution, Dr Tedros will bring this to the attention of the World Health Assembly and prepare a dedicated report, with WHO/Europe's input, assessing the health emergency in Ukraine, consequential international health risks and proposed responses.

In wrapping up today's meeting, the Regional Director noted, "These are tough times, but WHO's resolve to put health at the centre of recovery – rising above politics – is stronger than ever. While we discuss and debate, real lives of real people are on the line – millions

of children, women and men. Let us never lose sight of that. Every action has an impact; thinking through all of the consequences may take time, but our ultimate aim is to ensure the health and well-being of the people we are mandated to serve.”

Dr Kluge concluded, “Pan-European unity is more than a slogan – it’s the best way to move forward to ensure health for all. Let us remember the spirit that created the European Programme of Work, unanimously approved in 2020 by all 53 Member States in the WHO European Region. It’s this spirit that should guide us going forward.”

The Regional Committee is the highest decision-making body of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region. It normally meets once a year, in September, to shape the political commitment to improving the health and health conditions of the people living in the Region and to guide the work of WHO/Europe.

The 72nd session of the Regional Committee is scheduled to take place on 12–14 September 2022 in Tel Aviv, Israel.

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