

Statement by Commissioner Andriukaitis at the G20 Health Ministerial Meeting, Argentina

SESSION 1

Dear Ministers, Colleagues,

Firstly, I want to wish Argentina well on its G20 Presidency. I also want to thank Professor Rubinstein and Mr. Delgado for leading on sustainable development and for organising today's meeting. Each of the topics you chose – antimicrobial resistance; health systems strengthening; improving our response to health emergencies; and overweight and obesity in children is critically important to our citizens, our societies, our economies.

I think it is worth reiterating the potential impact of Antimicrobial Resistance or AMR – if we do not act decisively and cohesively. By 2050 there could be 10 million deaths worldwide due to AMR. The World Bank has warned that by 2050, AMR could cause global economic damage on a par with the 2008 financial crisis. This is an unacceptable scenario. The establishment of the AMR Research & Development Hub illustrates the value of the G20. But we must maintain political momentum and secure concrete commitments from multiple sectors. This threat cannot be resolved by the health sector alone – any viable solutions must follow a coherent 'one health' approach and recognise the connections between human and animal health and healthy ecosystems. This afternoon's simulation exercise is timely – I believe it will not only illustrate the danger posed by AMR across multiple sectors, but it will also highlight the need to improve our capacity to prevent, detect, prepare and respond to health emergencies. This is particularly true in the most vulnerable countries. Remember, the EU is your ally in improving health security. We established the European Medical Corps after the Ebola crisis – for this very purpose. Like the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, it can provide coordinated support to countries or international organisations in need of assistance. But we must ensure greater coherence between the various response and research mechanisms – especially around preparedness. And I urge this group to put its collective weight behind the WHO International Health Regulations and the WHO Emergency Reform.

Prosperous, sustainable societies depend on high-quality health systems that are resilient, equitable, and accessible. Strong health systems are essential in our fight against AMR and they are fundamental to how we prepare for and respond to health emergencies. We have a responsibility to protect and promote the right of everyone to enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental health. So I want to take this opportunity to reiterate the EU's commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and to achieving universal health coverage for all. We will also continue to support partner countries in their efforts to build strong, effective health systems. Indeed, we are currently preparing, with WHO, a programme focusing on access, primary care

and universal health coverage for 100 countries worldwide, to a total volume of EUR 175 million.

Ministers, These are global problems that require global solutions by global leaders. And those solutions depend on political will. As the G20, we have a collective responsibility to lead the movement towards sustainability. Let us ensure that we do so in a coordinated, strategic, and determined fashion.

Thank you.

SESSION 2

Dear Ministers, Colleagues,

In the European Union, nearly one in four boys and one in five girls is overweight or obese. One in every three children between the ages of six and nine is overweight or obese. These are alarming statistics and prove that childhood obesity is a major problem in all EU Member States – much as it is across the globe. So I am very grateful to Argentina for its commitment to addressing childhood development, in particular childhood overweight and obesity.

When I addressed the United Nations High level meeting on non-communicable diseases last week, I urged the global community to focus more on promotion and prevention in fighting the global epidemic of NCDs. In the EU, up to 7% of our national health budgets is spent on diseases linked to obesity each year, while only 3% is spent on prevention. And the funds available are dwarfed by the sums spent on the promotion of unhealthy food and drink products. We need to tackle the root causes of this problem – and that means improving the quality and diversity of nutrition. In line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we must strive for a future in which all people have access to affordable, safe, diversified and nutritious food. I also want to take this opportunity to stress a point that is fundamental to this discussion – governments and public health authorities cannot solve this crisis alone. We need a genuine health-in-all-policies, multi-stakeholder approach. This includes a strong commitment from food business operators on food reformulation and on reducing the exposure of children to aggressive and digital marketing of foods high in fat, salt and sugars. Unless we include the commercial determinants of health in our plans going forward, then we will fail before we even begin. So I am urging the private sector to show more ambition on this issue. They can be part of the solution – and I know that many industrial players and indeed primary producers feel the same. Of course, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of regular physical activity and creating healthy environments for our children, alongside a healthy diet. This also depends on engagement from other sectors – including transport, town planning, education and culture. And special attention should focus on families in lower socioeconomic situations, who are proportionally more affected by unhealthy lifestyles. Moving forward, the EU is determined to support EU Member States' efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO targets on non-communicable diseases. We are also strongly committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and combatting the threat of NCDs through our international cooperation and development policy in partner

countries.

Overweight and obesity can lead to hypertension or diabetes, which increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney disease. It is a vicious cycle of cause and consequence that has an immense human, social and economic cost. Early intervention, a health-in-all-policies approach, and a shift to prevention and promotion, can help break this cycle. Our children are our most vulnerable citizens and our most precious resource. We need to do more to help develop healthily, and we need to do it better.

Thank you.