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WHO, EU to accelerate progress on health

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Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO has completed a series of meetings with President Juncker and senior European Commission officials and also signed a joint statement with the European Parliament.

World Health Organization

Dr Tedros commended the fruitful cooperation between the European Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO), particularly in the fields of antimicrobial resistance, strengthening health systems and preparedness for outbreaks of communicable diseases in developing countries. President Juncker confirmed the support of the European Commission to the Global Action Plan on Health and Well Being to accelerate progress to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, including goal number 3, related to healthy lives and well-being at all ages.

President Juncker and Dr Tedros also spoke about the importance of focusing on air pollution and agreed to jointly organize a Global Vaccination Summit, building on initiatives to increase vaccination and improve vaccination confidence in the EU, with the aim of avoiding unnecessary deaths from preventable diseases.

Dr Tedros met separately with Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis responsible for Health and Food Safety; Commissioner Neven Mimica, responsible for international cooperation and development; Commissioner for Humanitarian aid and crisis management, Christos Stylianides and Commissioner Karmenu Vella, in charge of the Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs;, as well as with Director-General for Research, Science and Innovation Jean Paquet.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversaries of WHO and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights , Dr Tedros emphasized that “Both WHO’s Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights assert that health is a human right, rather than a privilege for those who can afford it. But we must remember that the right to health is not a given. It takes renewed political commitment and leadership in every generation – including ours.”

“The right to health “has been a platform for major health improvements” in the past 70 years. Globally, life expectancy has increased by 25 years. Smallpox has been eradicated and polio is on the brink”, he added. However, Dr Tedros warned of the rise of new health threats and the need for “unrelenting political commitment” to achieve Universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.