

## Discussion document for HoMs meeting of 31 March 2020

**Topic: Possible EU-led resolution on Covid-19 for presentation to the 73<sup>rd</sup> World health Assembly.**

### Preamble

At the HoMs meeting last week, we spent some time discussing the if, the when, and the how, of a World Health Assembly this year. Meanwhile, WHO DG Tedros has decided that there should be an Assembly in May on the dates originally foreseen but in an adapted form: with a minimalist agenda, a virtual meeting consisting of maybe just 2 hours each day, spanning 24 time zones. We still wait for details and even an official announcement. That is because the decision on the agenda of the Assembly is not in the purview of DG Tedros. Only the WHO Executive Board can decide on the agenda and we expect DG Tedros to convene an extraordinary virtual session of the EB to do so.

We can expect that the main topic of the WHA will be COVID-19 and we can also reasonably predict that the Assembly will be expected to have as its key outcome a resolution on COVID-19.

### Proposal for discussion

EUDEL has been taking soundings over the weekend and we consider that it would be worthwhile for HoMs to discuss whether the EU should take the lead (proposer and penholder) for such a COVID Resolution that the Assembly would adopt.

By doing so the EU would get good credit and publicity – offsetting some of the negative attention that the EU has been receiving in recent weeks due to border closures, export bans etc. It would also give the EU a modicum of control over the process and the content. We can be sure that if we are thinking of this then so are others. The risk of not taking pre-emptive action now is that if we do not, then somebody else will do so and we will forever be playing catchup.

We could consider announcing that we do this in partnership with the Africa Group. But, given their complicated decision-making and coordination processes, if we are to act quickly we may at best be able to say that we are in discussions with them about doing it jointly.

If we decide to proceed with this, time is key and we could announce it already at a next WHO COVID Briefing (the next one is this Thursday).

If EUMS are favourable, EUDEL is ready to prepare and circulate a skeleton of a proposal for such a resolution, containing what we think WHO Member States would consider as essential elements and rely on EUMS in drafting a zero-draft. EU health attachés could manage this process in Agora. The main decision to take now is whether and how to pursue this course of action.

In parallel, since this should ideally be seen as a North-South proposal, EUDEL could contact with the Chair of the African Group (Cameroun is currently the health focal point for the Africa Group).

*At this moment, it is too early to focus on the content of the resolution. EUDEL has ideas on content but in our view it will be crucial that such a resolution addresses the equitable and timely distribution of a vaccine globally. Given the amount of public money going into this 'moon-shot' the WHA should say something about that. WHO Emergency Operations Director 5.1.2e has already signalled this as the key long-term challenge. The Resolution should ask WHO to set up a process to address this issue.*