HCWH statements

Thank you.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the production, trade and use of single use plastics in healthcare and has evidenced the urgent need of a One Health approach. Fortunately, key actions are being taken by the health care sector - including ministries, hospitals, manufacturers, suppliers, health professionals, and others - to solve the health care plastics crisis.

No exemptions, we do not want to see the healthcare sector used as an excuse that prevents us from having a strong, ambitious treaty. Healthcare professionals are worried about the health of their patients and communities that are at risk by toxic materials in plastics that are being leached to patients' bodies.

The health sector is a major contributor to the increased demand for plastics, with a dramatic shift towards single-use items and plastic overuse. At least 30% of health care waste is plastic. Some waste streams from health care can comprise up to 83% plastic depending on the country and medical specialty.

- Through sustainable procurement criteria and waste audits, the health care sector is already reducing the use of plastics; specially single-use and unnecessary plastics.
- There are healthcare institutions and professionals working in all regions for the development of low carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable healthcare systems - including of course, plastics.
- We have partnerships with UN bodies, other international organizations, NGOs and philanthropy.
- We have developed tools, reports and dozens of training materials. We are already educating, disseminating information, and providing a learning hub and a peer-learning platform, all to scale innovative policies and transform the sector.
- For example, Global Green and Healthy Hospitals is a network with over 1,700 members in 81 countries representing 62,000 hospitals and health care centers.
- During climate COP26, we launched with WHO and the UK, the Program on Climate and Health that today has evolved to the global Alliance on Transformative Action for Climate and Health.

This growth in use has meant greater exposure of patients, health care workers, communities, and the environment to the toxic life cycle of plastics. Health care is essential to solving the crisis as a major contributor, and as a sector that represents, and can drive, a values-based focus on health and justice.

Healthcare professionals are very worried by the health of patients and communities as they bear a moral and ethical duty to advocate against the use of plastics in healthcare. As champions of patient well-being and environmental stewardship with direct contact with communities, we are committed to promoting sustainable alternatives, raising awareness, and influencing change.

Let us advocate for a plastic pollution-free healthcare system that aligns with our ethical responsibilities and fosters a healthier, more sustainable world.

“First, do no harm.”