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Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Minutes

Public hearing on “Public health emergency: the need for a holistic approach to multilateralism and health care”, held in İzmir, Türkiye, on Friday, 23 September 2022

In the framework of the report currently in preparation on “Public health emergency: the need for a holistic approach to multilateralism and health care” by **Ms Selin Sayek Böke** (Türkiye, SOC), the Committee **held** a public hearing with the participation of:

- ✓ **Ms Nuriye Ortaylı**, Public Health Expert (Türkiye)
- ✓ **Mr Kayıhan Pala**, Professor of Public Health at Bursa Uludağ University Faculty of Medicine (Türkiye)

Mr Alain Milon (EPP/DC), **First Vice-Chairperson of Committee**, opened the hearing and introduced the guest speakers.

Ms Sayek Böke presented her revised introductory memorandum, focusing on the right to health and the need for a new approach to public health. International public health structures should be strengthened, and multilateralism revitalised. Moreover, vaccination should be more accessible and affordable to all in all countries. Public health authorities must work together to overcome the commodification of public health model and rebalance the research mechanisms so as to factor in fairly both the public interest and private interests. A fact-finding visit to Geneva to hold meetings with the representatives of various international institutions, notably WHO, would hopefully contribute towards clarifying the priorities for action.

Ms Ortaylı stressed that the Covid-19 pandemic was not yet over and that public authorities should review the leadership structures so as to draw lessons from the past failures. There had been high expectations for guidance from WHO but the public was not aware of its limitations nor strengths, especially in dealing with individual countries, as WHO was increasingly dependent on external funding. Member States had recognised this as a problem and were eager to increase their financial contributions. Unfortunately, big private donors were not accountable to the public (e.g., the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation). The TRIPS agreement of the WTO (World Trade Organization) contained some flexibilities that had not been exploited properly during the pandemic. A waiver had been possible but had not been put in place. All the negotiations on this matter had taken place behind the closed doors, and some big countries were reticent to support this option. It was now important to support WHO in negotiations on a new global pandemic treaty.

Mr Pala regretted the lack of global co-ordinated response during the pandemic. Unless vaccination was publicly funded, vaccines could not be widely distributed to all. The vaccination rate in some countries remained as low as 25% while some countries had achieved 70%. There was a need for stronger pandemic preparedness. WHO should be more independent; it should not be acting on behalf of governments. More effort was needed to improve the statistics and the sharing of data which should underpin policy decisions. Basic research and development in the medical field should be publicly funded, and the opinion of physicians should be better taken into account by decision makers.

Mr Hunko deplored that the bulk of WHO's funding now depended on targeted funding from foundations and private sector actors. His country, Germany, had unfortunately blocked the use of the waiver for Covid-19 vaccines under the WTO, while the Russian and American presidents were in favour. Moreover, it was unfortunate that the Western countries refused to recognize the Sputnik and Sinovac vaccines, and there was a lack transparency regarding Pfizer's research on the new type of vaccine against Covid-19. Political decisions should be based on evidence.

¹ The minutes were approved and declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 2 December 2022.

Mr Fridez stressed the importance of access to hygiene and healthy food as a basis for the right to health.

Mr Amraoui recalled that WHO's budget corresponded to that of a hospital. The WHO was stigmatised, but the elements of its weakness had already been highlighted during the Ebola pandemic. It should undergo serious reform. The Council of Europe should defend multilateralism.

Ms Sayek Böke asked the experts about ways of strengthening WHO and the supremacy of the public interest through monitoring.

Mr Milon noted that while WHO was lagging behind on Covid-19, it had taken significant action after the H1N1 scandal.

He was supported by **Ms Ortaylı**, who recalled that some reforms had been undertaken after SARS in 2003. A major problem was the lack of implementation of changes in regulation. Parliamentarians should advocate stronger compliance at national level. The sharing of data and alert systems did not work properly, and the transparent behaviour was punished (such as in the case of South Africa revealing the emergence of Omicron variant, which had led to travel bans penalising travellers from this country). WHO should help rebalance the global system.

Mr Pala suggested that parliamentarians could push for changes in the structure of WHO. This organisation alone could not do everything but there should be monitoring mechanisms to expose the shortcomings of the governmental action. There was a need to better track risks to public health stemming from migration and climate change.

Mr Millon then thanked all the speakers and closed the hearing.

List of participants / liste de participant(e)s

Ms Jorida Tabaku	Albania / <i>Albanie</i>	Zz...
M. Pere López	Andorra / <i>Andorre</i>	Mme Mònica Bonell
Mr Armen Gevorgyan	Armenia / <i>Arménie</i>	Mr Eduard Aghajanyan
Mr Franz Leonhard Essl	Austria / <i>Autriche</i>	Mr Michel Reimon
Mr Stefan Schennach	Austria / <i>Autriche</i>	Ms Doris Bures
Ms Nigar Arpadarai	Azerbaijan / <i>Azerbaïdjan</i>	Ms Parvin Karimzada
Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva	Azerbaijan / <i>Azerbaïdjan</i>	Ms Konul Nurullayeva
Mr Bob De Brabandere	Belgium / <i>Belgique</i>	Ms Els Van Hoof
M. Simon Moutquin	Belgium / <i>Belgique</i>	Mme Latifa Gahouchi
Ms Snježana Novaković Bursać	Bosnia and Herzegovina / <i>Bosnie-Herzégovine</i>	Mr Amir Fazlić
Mr Hamid Hamid	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>	Mr Stanislav Anastassov
Zz...	Bulgaria / <i>Bulgarie</i>	Zz...
Ms Zdravka Bušić	Croatia / <i>Croatie</i>	Ms Ivana Kekin
Ms Christiana Erotokritou	Cyprus / <i>Chypre</i>	Mr Constantinos Efstathiou
Ms Klára Dostálová	Czech Republic / <i>République tchèque</i>	Mr Aleš Juchelka
Ms Michaela Šebelová	Czech Republic / <i>République tchèque</i>	Mr Miroslav Adámek
Ms Katarina Ammitzbøll	Denmark / <i>Danemark</i>	Mr Kim Valentin
Mr Urmas Reitelmann	Estonia / <i>Estonie</i>	Ms Vilja Toomast
Ms Minna Reijonen	Finland / <i>Finlande</i>	Ms Tarja Filatov
Mme Jennifer De Temmerman	France	M. Dimitri Houbbron
M. Bruno Fuchs	France	Mme Martine Wonner
M. Alain Milon	France	M. Christian Klinger
Mme Laurence Trastour-Isnart	France	M. Pierre Morel-à-L'Huissier
Ms Mariam Lashkhi	Georgia / <i>Géorgie</i>	Mr Levan Ioseliani
Ms Heike Engelhardt	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Franziska Kersten
Mr Andrej Hunko	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Sabine Weiss
Mr Christian Petry	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Martina Stamm-Fibich
Mr Harald Weyel	Germany / <i>Allemagne</i>	Ms Katrin Staffler
Mr Sokratis Famellos	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>	Mr Kyriakos Velopoulos
Ms Nina Kasimati	Greece / <i>Grèce</i>	Ms Foteini Pipili
Ms Mónika Bartos	Hungary / <i>Hongrie</i>	Mr Jenő Manninger
Mr Róbert Dudás	Hungary / <i>Hongrie</i>	Mme Zita Gurmai
Mr Bjarni Jónsson	Iceland / <i>Islande</i>	Ms Jódís Skúladóttir
Mr Joseph O'Reilly	Ireland / <i>Irlande</i>	Ms Lynn Boylan
Mr Fabio Di Micco	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Gianluca Perilli
Mr Emilio Floris	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Ms Maria Rizzotti
Mr Gaspare Antonio Marinello	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Ms Barbara Guidolin

Mr Gianfranco Rufa	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Mr Manuel Vescovi
Mr Uldis Budriķis	Latvia / <i>Lettonie</i>	Mr Edgars Tavors
Ms Franziska Hoop	Liechtenstein	Mr Peter Frick
Mr Kęstutis Masiulis	Lithuania / <i>Lituanie</i>	Mr Gintautas Paluckas
M. Max Hengel	Luxembourg	M. Paul Galles
Ms Romilda Baldacchino Zarb	Malta / <i>Malte</i>	Mr Joseph Beppe Fenech Adami
Mr Ion Groza	Republic of Moldova / <i>République de Moldova</i>	Ms Reghina Ȃpostolova
M. José Badia	Monaco	Mme Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo
Mr Miloš Konatar	Montenegro / <i>Monténégro</i>	Zz...
Ms Reina De Bruijn-Wezeman	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Mr Bob Van Pareren
Ms Ria Oomen-Ruijten	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Ms Agnes Mulder
Ms Artina Qazimi	North Macedonia / <i>Macédoine du Nord</i>	Mr Vlado Misajlovski
Ms Lisa Marie Ness Klungland	Norway / <i>Norvège</i>	Ms Linda Hofstad Helleland
Ms Danuta Jazłowiecka	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Mr Tomasz Latos
Mr Bolesław Piecha	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Ms Marta Kubiak
Mr Andrzej Szejna	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Zz...
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Mr Zoran Tomić	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>	Mr Gojko Palalić
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Ms Andreja Zabret	Slovenia / <i>Slovénie</i>	Ms Suzana Lep Šimenko
Ms María Fernández	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Susana Sumelzo
Mr Antón Gómez-Reino	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Belén Hoyo
Ms Carmen Leyte	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Mr Salvador Vidal
Mr Alexander Christiansson	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Mr Ola Möller
Ms Carina Ohlsson	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Ms Sultan Kayhan
Ms Sibel Arslan	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	M. Pierre-Alain Fridez
M. Jean-Pierre Grin	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	Mme Ada Marra
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Mr Halil Özşavli	Türkiye	Ms Sena Nur Çelik
Mr Hişyar Özsoy	Türkiye	Ms Feleknaş Uca
Ms Selin Sayek Böke	Türkiye	M. Haluk Koç
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Mr / *M.* Taner Yüzgeç, President, Chamber of Civil Engineers (Türkiye) / *Président, Chambre des ingénieurs civils (Türkiye)*

Mr / *M.* Erdem Canbay, Professor and Chair of the Civil Engineering Department of Middle East Technical University (METU, Türkiye) / *Professeur et Président du Département de génie civil de l'Université technique du Moyen-Orient (METU, Türkiye)*

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