Statement of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and WHO Regions for Health Network presented at the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health
Budapest, Hungary, 5–7 July 2023

At a time that our citizens of regions and cities are concerned about the lack of peace, safety and security, the “triple crisis” brought by the intertwining of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss provides an even further burden to our citizens and their children. At the Sixth Ministerial Conference (Czech Republic, 13–15 June 2017) we presented a joint statement to the Ostrava Declaration, which called for accelerated transitions towards resilient, healthy, equitable and sustainable societies. We believe these objectives are even more pressing today.

We are fully committed to ensuring the highest attainable level of health and well-being for all people in the European Region. We emphasize that health is a fundamental human right and a human necessity, and that only collaborative, coordinated action at the global, national, regional and local levels will allow us to achieve health, well-being, and sustainable and equitable development for all. We stress the importance of a healthy environment for improved health and well-being of people and communities. We stress the importance of planetary health, for survival on earth. We further highlight the interdependency of action across sectors, settings and levels of governance.

We, the cities and national networks of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network, together with the regions of the WHO Regions for Health Network, support the Budapest Declaration, the outcome of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, Budapest, Hungary, and the “Environment and health roadmap for healthier people, a thriving planet and a sustainable future 2023-2030”.

We recognize the vital importance of concerted action by the sectors for health and environment, at the local and regional levels, as well as other sectors and partners, to meet the ambitious common goals of equity, health, and well-being for all.

We recognize the scope for important synergies between the objectives of the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the WHO Regions for Health Network, the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the European Program of Work. We emphasize the strength of the mandate held by cities and regions to take action, and that we cannot afford to fail in the pursuit of our goals in order to improve the health and well-being of people and their communities.

By doing so, we will ensure efforts at the local and regional level, to:
- Prioritizing action to tackle the most pressing health challenges related to climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss
- Supporting the delivery of essential services and a safe built environment for healthy and resilient communities; and
- Strengthening governance, intersectoral collaboration, human resources and knowledge for health and environment.
We, as cities and regions, are closest to the people and our input is crucial to successful multilevel governance for the sustainable development of healthier, happier, more resilient people and communities, both now and in the future. As acknowledged in the Declaration, the role of local and subnational levels of government is pivotal in promoting innovation, improving preparedness, decreasing inequalities, including gender inequalities, and strengthening resilience.

We at the subnational level have significant political and administrative functions in areas that matter to health and environment, such as housing, food, transport, urban planning, and the management of the healthcare sector. We are facilitators, catalysts and advocates of the right to the highest level of health for all. We believe in the importance of bringing together various stakeholders across civil society to mobilize, protect and promote the rights of all our citizens, particularly those who are poor and vulnerable, leaving no one behind.

We, through our networks, will support and collaborate with the EHP Partnerships, to implement and disseminate guidance, methods, tools and training packages, foster capacity building and training and the exchange of know-how and expertise; provide technical assistance at the local and regional level for the development, implementation and evaluation of integrated policy approaches; engage into project-related sub-regional cooperation including the joint use of technical facilities and expertise; and provide international advocacy and cooperative opportunities to the EHP.

We, the WHO European Healthy Cities Network and the WHO Regions for Health Network, adopt this statement, resulting from the discussion organized on 18th of April, 2023, supporting the 2023 Ministerial Declaration. We commit to taking forward this agenda in the spirit of the Seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health as impetus for further engagement, collaboration, and action; according to respective programs and roadmaps.