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## CONTRIBUTION FROM THE SEEHN

### to the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health, 13–15 June 2017, Ostrava, Czech Republic

Delivered on behalf of the SEEHN by Mr. Andrei Cazacu, Head of the International Affairs and European Integration

**Honourable Minister of Health of the Czech Republic;**  
**Distinguished high level representatives of Member States from the WHO European Region;**  
**Dear colleagues;**  
**Ladies and gentleman;**

The ministers of health of the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Bulgaria, the State of Israel, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Republic of Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, member countries of the South-eastern Europe Health Network, have gathered at our Fourth Health Ministerial Forum: “Health, Well-being and Prosperity in South East Europe in the Framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030”, commemorating 15 years of regional cooperation in public health in SEE, in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova on 3–4 April 2017 to discuss the progress made and to promote continued enhanced cooperation on public health in the SEE region.

The newly endorsed Chisinau Pledge 2017: - *Health, wellbeing and prosperity in South Eastern Europe by 2030 in the context of the UN sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, supports the development of regional approaches:

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#### SEE HEALTH NETWORK MEMBER STATES



#### PARTNERS





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- to create new opportunities for achieving better health, well-being, prosperity, equity and accountability in health, thus building on major global and European resolutions, charters, treaties, frameworks and action plans, and the European health policy, Health 2020;
  - to sustain and strengthen the regional cooperation in public health in South-eastern Europe by taking deliberate action to influence governance in other policy arenas to promote and protect health, including education, trade and intellectual property, sustainable energy, income inequality, social protection, water and sanitation, migration, food security and quality, environmental protection and sustainable consumption and production;
  - to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by positioning health as a major contributor to all SDGs, recognizing that over half of the SDG targets have a health focus or address major determinants of health such as poverty, education, gender, equity, employment, food, water and sanitation, cities, energy, climate change and ecosystems, and sustainable consumption and production;
  - to further upgrade public health services and capacities by establishing a SEE Health Network platform on cross-border collaboration for public health services, including all-hazard preparedness and response, and services at Points of Entry designated under the IHR;
  - to work more closely and efficiently with our partners to make the best use of their unprecedented support by working within the “One United Nations” process in the WHO European Region, with health serving as the basis for an issue-based coalition for the implementation of health across the SDGs, involving advocacy, partnerships, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation, with strong leadership of WHO;
  - to integrate health into wider development approaches, defining necessary priorities and the needs for accountability, resources, innovation and research as key to success.

With this statement of the SEEHN we would like to highlight the progress, challenges and opportunities, to acknowledge the existence of innovations and major improvements, particularly in need to tackle environmental determinants of health and management of health in emergencies, with the implementation of the IHR and Protocol on Water and Health.

In the past years, we witnessed wars, refugee crises, floods, and other extreme weather events. We are well aware that according to WHO Report, ambient air pollution is single biggest environmental threat to human health in most of the cities in South East Europe. In rural areas of our sub-region, supply with safe drinking water and indoor air pollution are still affecting human health.



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This situation entailed an adequate and coordinated response, at national but also sub-regional level. SEE Member States have demonstrated what collaboration and support means, when common response was provided to the floods in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia, and later in Bulgaria and Macedonia.

The upcoming years will be crucial to achieve sustainable future in our sub-region by implementing at the national level 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but also in working together under the Ostrava Declaration. Ostrava Declaration will mark up the years to come in implementing common agenda for the improvement of health and well-being in the area of environmental impacts on health in Europe and we are welcoming its commitments.

We are acknowledging joint work of WHO and UNECE under The Protocol on Water and Health implemented in our countries so far. Its objectives and programme of work for 2017-2019 are fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda which will provide an additional support for the future activities. The Protocol has been a precursor of the SDG on water and sanitation and put the region on the right track by promoting integration of policies, intersectoral cooperation and holistic and preventive approaches.

We acknowledge that global, environmental and social changes, including climate change, are driving many risks, and affect directly human health; therefore, there is a recognized need to improve national capacities in environmental health in SEE.

We call on our SEE Governments and our Partner the WHO, to continue work with our Member States, relevant stakeholders and interested parties, to identify and recommend the most effective mechanisms to addresses the comprehensive set of policies and interventions for improving health, from the impacts of polluted environment and climate change.