



## World Health Day: Statement by Commissioners Stella Kyriakides and Virginijus Sinkevičius

Brussels, 6 April 2022

In the midst of the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Ukraine due to the atrocious impact of Russia's unconscionable war, we mark World Health Day. At a time when war in Europe is forcing millions of people to leave their homes and flee brutal violence under precarious conditions, we are more than ever reminded of how fragile our health is and how intertwined it is to the health of our environment.

The consequences of the Russian war in Ukraine have not only inflicted untold suffering on the Ukrainian people. It is also affecting food supply and threatening global food security. The broad environmental damage ranges from impacts on nature and pollution from oil spills, to leakage of hazardous chemicals from exploded or unexploded ammunition will affect health of Ukrainian citizens for decades.

We are marking World Health Day at a time when the sustainability of Europe and our planet is in crisis. At the same time we are still in the throes of a global pandemic and where cases of cancer, heart disease and asthma are on the rise due to environmental factors as well as the health care impacts of living with a pandemic for more than two years.

It is time for change. Our good health and longevity depend on a clean environment. Clean air and water, a healthy planet, clean oceans, forests and food systems are not a luxury. They are essential for our survival. The climate and environment crisis is also a health crisis as more than 13 million deaths around the world can be directly attributable to avoidable environmental causes. This is why we must ensure that the "One Health" approach becomes a guiding compass for our work.

On this World Health Day, the time to talk, debate, argue must give way to urgent action to ensure that the future of our planet is safeguarded, and is one in which we can thrive. On this day we have to remember that water and air have no borders – the damage that Russia is causing in Ukraine, is damage to all of us.

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