Supportive Statement and Presentation of the Ostrava Youth Declaration in the Closing Plenary session

by

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(EEHYC Executive Board)

- Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Colleagues, Fellow Youth Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Let me begin by thanking the Government of the Czech Republic, the Moravian-Silesian Region and the city of Ostrava, for hosting this Conference. I am sure that for the great majority of us, this was a distinctive and unforgettable time in our professional and personal lives.

- We are also deeply thankful to the EHTF and this Conference Chair, and our international partners, particularly the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the UNECE and the UNEP.

- I also want to thank the international youth delegates, who, along with EEHYC whose many members I proudly see sitting here, have done an absolutely terrific job in leading the young people’s efforts to advance our environment and health goals this last years.

- Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, here in Ostrava, in the next hour, let us make clear to Europe that we will always remember the stakes. Let us stand firm in support of the goals that we set in Parma and recommit ourselves to double our efforts to meet them. Let us say that when it comes to environment and health, we will commit not just to doing our best, but what is required.

- For us Young People, government leadership is vital. However we urge your current efforts on this topic to increase and we will always pressure you to rule prudently.

- Here at the 6th Ministerial Conference, no one can deny the remarkable progress that we have made – progress that actually was pretty hard to imagine even a few years ago.
• We, the Young People, acknowledge the positive influence of previous declarations and actions taken to safeguard and improve both health and the environment. We recognize the improvements achieved in human health and wellbeing. We reaffirm our commitments from the 2004 Budapest Youth Declaration and the 2010 Parma Youth Declaration.

• Now, EEHYC has in place several national platforms, each of them have come up with their own plan, setting goals that are based on their own abilities and their own circumstances. This process gave us a framework that is built to last, and an amount of accountability that has never been seen. After a long consultation process, together with the direct input of more than 70 international youth delegates from across the European Region, this framework allowed EEHYC to put together the Ostrava Youth Declaration which is based on the outcomes of the Vienna Youth Position Paper.

• In the document, we welcome the Member States reaffirmed commitments on ensuring safe and sustainable water and sanitation in the context of climate change, improving air quality, reducing waste and pollution and strengthening resilience to climate change. We also fully support the Member States new commitments on achieving environmental sustainability of health systems and on making European cities environmentally sustainable and resilient to global environmental change in order to protect and promote health and wellbeing.

• However, strengthening youth involvement in the Process still needs significant improvement, and the process would further benefit from Member States enhancing their practical support for youth participation, demonstrating a stronger attachment to implementing the Parma and subsequent commitments to youth across the Region.

• Therefore, we call upon the Member States to follow up on their commitments by recognising EEHYC National Platforms in all WHO Member States as stakeholders - youth participation structures, creating financial support mechanisms and the contexts for our meaningful contribution in environment and health decision-making processes. We also call on You to integrate youth representatives of National Platforms in local and national task forces and involve them in national decision making and policy development processes on Environment, Health, Mobility and Transport issues.
• We express our interest for Member States to initiate and strengthen the collaboration between Ministries of Health, Environment and the Ministries of Youth and Education in order to set-up and increase formal and non-formal educational programs.

• Ladies and gentlemen, the young people are more cohesive than ever not just in going through the challenge, but in defying it with real action, in making a difference.

• And no one should doubt the majority of us who deeply understand the connections between environment and health. **We are determined to follow our goals stated in Ostrava Youth Declaration.**

• In addition to this document, we also developed an Ostrava Youth Commitment to Act, where we reemphasize the areas we want to work on according to our needs, interest, expertise and capacity. Yes, we made commitments. 33 commitments to be precise, on the same thematic areas addressed in Ostrava Ministerial Declaration. Based on this we will develop an Implementation Plan to follow up on the commitments taken.

• What we pretend here in Ostrava, is to send serious message to You: **Make the European Environment and Health Process stronger than ever. You can do good and do well at the same time.**

• The point now is not if we will shift to a clean economy. The real point is if we will make such shift in time to prevent further damages in the Europeans health.

• But we must be pragmatist. Europe will not have another chance. Time is scarce and the environment is changing at a progressively level with frightening health consequences. Please see for yourself what is happening. We Young People can’t wait much more for the policies that are necessary to address such problematic. The costs of not doing enough would in most cases take centuries to recuperate, or even be irreparable. And if we fail, **I am sure it won’t happen,** but if we fail, it will demonstrate how one generation renounced accountability for the future.

• This conference is a vital mark. During this last days, we saw leaders, academics and volunteers who came from all around Europe to be in Ostrava. This is much more than an assembly of government dignitaries. People from all areas came to demonstrate their
work and to debate means to increase it. And although 7 years have passed since the last meeting in Parma, this one reminds us how considerable this movement has increased and developed. In our humble opinion this is evident of the strong capacity and expertise the Europeans have to face the future.

- However we have to provoke you: Do we have the true determination? Because our success will not materialize without strong collaboration, inclusivity, compromise, and above all, your good governance.

- For you in power, ladies and gentlemen, don’t look for the presence in this Conference as just an official act. We will challenge you with choices about which path to take at this serious moment. Therefore we ask you, on behalf of millions of young people around the WHO European Region, to do your individual reflection before taking permanent decisions.

- Understand that, if you do not follow in the future the compromises that you will endorse today, we young people, will look at it not only as a political failure. It will be a moral disappointment for us, and in such times of increasing transparency and claim for liability, we will not admit smokescreen of your resolutions consequences.

- Bear in mind, Young People and EEHYC are working for triumph in this battle.

- We are open to Member States support to improve the Youth Coalition continuous active role in advocating greater engagement of youth at the national and international levels, including the new institutional framework.

- In name of the Young People from the Pan-European Region, EEHYC looks forward to working with you on making the aspirations from the Ostrava Ministerial Declaration and the Ostrava Youth Declaration a reality.

- Thank you.

by Dr. António Marques Pinto (EEHYC Executive Board)