

## 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion charters a path for creating ‘well-being societies’

15 December 2021 - Past epidemics showed us the importance of resilient health systems. The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp focus the importance of resilient societies. The 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion on 13-15 December 2021 marked the start of a global movement on the concept of well-being in societies. A focus on well-being encourages different sectors to work together to address global challenges and help people take control over their health and lives.

Over 4500 participants of the Global Conference, who met virtually and in Geneva, Switzerland, agreed on a Geneva Charter for Well-being. The charter builds on the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion and the legacy of nine global conferences on health promotion. It highlighted the need for global commitments to achieve equitable health and social outcomes now and for future generations, without destroying the health of our planet. This charter will drive policy-makers and world leaders to adopt this approach and commit to concrete action.

“Health does not begin in a hospital or clinic. It begins in our homes and communities, with the food we eat and the water we drink, the air we breathe, in our schools and our workplaces,” said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General. “We have to fundamentally change the way that leaders in politics, the private sector, and international institutions think about and value health, and to promote growth that is based on health and well-being for people and the planet, for countries in all income levels.”

The Charter outlines the necessary elements of a ‘well-being society’ and what needs to be done in order to better prevent and respond to the multiple health and ecological crises we face globally. It identifies key action areas and offers instruments for implementation.

The document encourages five key actions:

1. Design an equitable economy that serves human development within planetary boundaries;
2. Create public policy for the common good;
3. Achieve universal health coverage;
4. Address the digital transformation to counteract harm and disempowerment and to strengthen the benefits; and
5. Value and preserve the planet.

“It is time to look at how the economy can support the societal goal of well-being, as an investment that is the foundation of productive, resilient and inclusive economies,” said Dr Rüdiger Krech, WHO Director for Health Promotion. “We cannot - we must not - go back to the same exploitative patterns of production and consumption, the same disregard for the planet that sustains all life, the same cycle of panic and neglect, and the same divisive politics that fueled this pandemic.”

To change the global development landscape, both the well-being of people and the planet must become central to defining humanity’s progress. This Charter calls upon nongovernmental and civic organizations, academia, business, governments, international organizations and all concerned to work in society-wide partnerships for decisive implementation of strategies for health and well-being. These will drive the transformation towards well-being societies in all countries, centering around the most marginalized populations.

Moving forward countries must prioritize health as part of a larger ecosystem that encompasses environmental, social, economic, and political factors. Universal health coverage, based on strong primary health care, must be at the core of all our efforts, as the cornerstone of social, economic and political stability. And the narrative around health should be reframed, not as a cost, but as an investment in our common future.

Available from: <https://www.who.int/news/item/15-12-2021-10th-global-conference-on-health-promotion-charters-a-path-for-creating-well-being-societies>