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Dr Lilja D. Alfreðsdóttir  
Minister of Education, Science and Culture  
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26 October 2020

Dear Minister,

I have the honour to refer to your letter dated 7 October 2020 addressed to my colleagues in the Department of Mental Health and Substance Use, expressing your support for the Seventy-third World Health Assembly's Consolidated report by the Director-General (document A73/5) and the World Health Organization's (WHO) work in the area of brain health and the nervous system. I concur that this report is an important step forward in helping people with neurological disorders worldwide, and furthering research to ultimately find a cure for conditions affecting the brain and nervous system.

WHO is committed to improving the lives of the large number of people worldwide who live with conditions affecting the brain and nervous system, including those suffering from spinal cord injury. Universal health coverage, WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019-2023, and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda provide a global impetus to mobilize political will across countries, in collaboration with civil society partners and other stakeholders in order to foster innovative research into neurological disorders and brain health.

In line with WHO's existing mandates for specific brain health conditions and in collaboration with WHO programmes on road safety, injury prevention and rehabilitation, WHO stands ready to support countries to develop an integrated and multisectoral public health response to brain health for all (including the nervous system). A central pillar of this response will be the harmonization of fragmented research results and underused knowledge into a shared cohesive framework to identify new treatment options with potential to cure more neurological disorders, including spinal cord injury.

I, too, share the hope that nations worldwide will join together to develop a comprehensive public health response to brain health and achieve a breakthrough towards curing neurological disorders, including paralysis. In order for this to be achieved we now need political commitment and strong collaboration across sectors and between all stakeholders. This includes not only Member States and the WHO Secretariat but also civil society and patient associations.

cc: The Minister of Health, Ministry of Welfare, Reykjavík  
The Chief Medical Officer, Landlaeknir/Directorate of Health, Reykjavík  
Permanent Mission of Iceland to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations  
at Geneva

In this context, I commend and would like to express my gratitude towards your strong support in fostering a global public health response to brain health and furthering shared, innovative research into neurological disorders. I also understand that Iceland will also be financially supporting the WHO's Brain Health Unit to carry forward this important work and I would like take this opportunity to thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Ren Minghui  
Assistant Director-General  
Universal Health Coverage/Communicable  
Noncommunicable Diseases