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Public health emergency: the need for a holistic approach to multilateralism and health care

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

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This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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The Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us of the right to health and the critical importance of multilateralism. As the pandemic evolves, sustainable, inclusive, and effective vaccination programmes are required to ensure public health. Being a critical pillar of primary care health services, vaccination can be considered a public good.

In its Resolution 2329 (2020), the Parliamentary Assembly calls for promoting responsible research, development and production of medicines, vaccines and other medical equipment, and insists on making them accessible and affordable to all. However, despite publicly funded research and international efforts to provide an equitable distribution of medical goods, structural problems persist. Excessive commodification of health services and the current set of international rules for trade and intellectual property protection impede effective access to healthcare.

While the Assembly, through its Recommendation 2174 (2020), expressed belief that "the Council of Europe's human rights mandate requires the re-establishment of comprehensive intergovernmental co-operation and co-ordination in the field of public health", its Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development should make further proposals for building this holistic multilateral effort by:

– bringing together the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization and others in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to revisit the rules governing the health-care industry in the provision of essential medicines, vaccines and health-care services within and between countries;

– ensuring that both the public and the private sectors in health care build their operations on the basis of human rights, notably the right to health, and guarantee fair access to treatments and vaccinations for all as a public good.