

## **WaterAid statement**

### **Agenda item 15: Health workforce**

### **Agenda item 16: Committing to implementation of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)**

Chair and honourable delegates,

Clean water, sanitation and hygiene are pillars of public health, gender equity and dignity and are critical pathways to transformative health outcomes for reproductive, maternal, adolescent and child health. Clean water, sanitation and hygiene can:

- prevent pandemics
- keep children healthy
- enable women to manage their periods with dignity
- create safe environments for women to receive and provide healthcare services

Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is what women want. In a global survey of more than 1.2 million women, improved access to WASH and clean facilities was the second highest demand in maternal and reproductive care.

Strong and gender-responsive health systems, underpinned by WASH, are essential to respond to COVID-19 and to build back better. Globally, women represent 70% of the health workforce and are more likely to have frontline roles particularly as nurses, midwives and community health workers.

To prepare for future health crises, and to protect and promote health workers, and the health and the rights of women, children and adolescents, WaterAid urges Member States, the WHO and partners to:

- Urgently invest in increasing access to clean water, decent toilets and hygiene in homes, and healthcare facilities and other public spaces
- Implement accountability processes that empower women, girls, health workers and auxiliary staff, such as cleaners, to hold decision makers and service providers to account for access to WASH as part of health governance
- Prioritise and finance safe, clean and empowering working environments in the development of the next health workforce action plan (2022-2030)
- Ensure services and infrastructure meet the specific needs of women and girls, such as sanitation services that are sex-segregated, accessible to heavily pregnant women and women with disabilities, and hygiene infrastructure to meet their menstrual health needs.

Thank you.