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Schools for Health in Europe

Tuesday, 08 March 2022

## Peace, Democracy and Equity as Non-Negotiable Principles of Health Promoting Schools

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### **A statement from the Schools for Health in Europe Network Foundation (SHE) on the war against Ukraine**

Since its establishment in 1991 as the first European network for school health promotion, SHE has been committed to the vision that every child should have the right to benefit from a Health Promoting School (HPS). With 39 member countries from Europe and Central Asia, SHE strives, among other things, to share best practices, expertise, and skills to support the development and implementation of school health promotion. As outlined and emphasized in conference resolutions and other policy documents, this work is rooted in fundamental values such as democracy, equity and inclusion. Only in 2019, as a result of the 5th European Conference on Health Promoting Schools in Moscow, it was emphasized that the HPS stands by its inalienable democratic values as a foundation that reflects openness and mutual respect.

However, what we have been witnessing in the past days and weeks fundamentally contradicts these basic values and principles. War endangers the freedom and lives of millions of people and at the same time increases the insecurity of peaceful coexistence on a global level. Those for whom we are most concerned are particularly at risk: children and young people, their social networks and their healthy futures. Families are torn apart and uncertainty about the future affects the health and safety of generations. As highlighted by the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986, peace is an essential prerequisite that not only affects health directly (e. g. physical and mental injuries, death) but is highly linked to further resources for health. Amongst others, this includes education as a human right. Young people in Ukraine are not only exposed to great health risks or forced to flee, but they are also deprived of the opportunity to develop and grow through education. Health and education are closely intertwined, with the Health Promoting School approach aiming at contributing to both.

SHE as an international NGO strongly condemn the war of aggression and wish to express full solidarity with the Ukrainian people. We emphasize that the vision of SHE and its values are immutable and form the basis of our thinking and actions. Hence, we call on all governments and people in Europe and beyond to stand up for inalienable human rights, to stop warlike conflicts in Ukraine and other parts of the world and to advocate for the healthy development of children and youth.