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Concerns Raised Over the 2021 UN's High-Level Political Forum Ministerial Declaration Key Recommendations Regarding Global Response to COVID-19 Are Being Ignored

July 14, 2021 (Albuquerque, NM) - Concerns have been raised by one of the [NGO Major Group](#)'s members, Phoenix Zones Initiative, regarding news from the UN's High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and the lack of consensus on the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted on July 15th. After four months of consultations and multiple drafts of the declaration, government delegations have yet to agree on issues including climate change, healthcare, and biodiversity. Of particular concern are some governments attempts to downplay the importance of key recommendations regarding global response to COVID-19, its impact, and the prevention of future pandemics. The HLPF is the UN's core platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

Dr. Hope Ferdowsian, CEO of Phoenix Zones Initiative, a global nonprofit organization which advances the interconnected rights, health, and wellbeing of people, animals, and the planet through a [Just One Health](#) approach, served as an expert advisor in preparation for the forum. Her focus was SDG 3: "Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages."

"We have been generally encouraged by the leadership of Jukka Salovaara, Permanent Representative of Finland, and Mohammed Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq, the two co-facilitators who have led the Ministerial Declaration negotiation, as various stakeholders try to address the key issues surrounding COVID-19, deal with its impacts, and develop preventative measures globally," says Dr. Ferdowsian. "However, it's troubling that the process has been interrupted by breaking of the silence procedure on various versions of the text, and that some governments have tried to downplay the importance of issues such as human rights and the treatment of animals and the environment."

Though disappointed by the recent developments, Dr. Ferdowsian points out how important and significant the work of Phoenix Zones Initiative and fellow NGO Major Group members is. She notes that stakeholders around the world are looking for vision, leadership, and compassion during these very difficult times—and that any further delays in doing so increases the risks for future pandemics.

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About Dr. Hope Ferdowsian

[Hope Ferdowsian](#) is president and CEO of Phoenix Zones Initiative and author of *Phoenix Zones: Where Strength Is Born and Resilience Lives*. For more than two decades, as a double board-certified internal medicine and preventive medicine physician, she has cared for individuals who have experienced displacement and violence, while she has also worked on public policies to address structural inequities, abuse, and exploitation. Dr. Ferdowsian's work across six continents has included collaboration with the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States and the development of medical, public health, and educational resources for nongovernmental organizations, national governments, and intergovernmental organizations. Dr. Ferdowsian was named a Humanitarian of the Year in the American College of Physicians in 2017. She is also an associate professor at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, a co-director of the Society for Asylum Medicine, and a medical expert for Physicians for Human Rights.

About Phoenix Zones Initiative

Phoenix Zones Initiative is a global nonprofit organization which advances the interconnected rights, health, and wellbeing of people, animals, and the planet through a [Just One Health](#) approach. Led by physicians and a diverse team, Phoenix Zones Initiative focuses on widespread ethical and structural change. Phoenix Zones Initiative advances legal, economic, and public policy to uplift the most vulnerable and marginalized, including children and animals, and the organization also provides resources so others can do the same. Follow Phoenix Zones Initiative on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), and the [Phoenix Zones Initiative](#) website.

About NGO Major Group

The [NGO Major Group](#) is tasked with facilitating the participation and enhancing the engagement of non-governmental organizations in the processes directly and indirectly related to the High-Level Political Forum. When possible, the NGO Major Group works to organize positions on behalf of its members to be delivered in various United Nations spaces. Because of the diversity of voices and perspectives within this group, the NGO Major Group is organized around thematic clusters that act as hubs of expertise on numerous issues and/or Sustainable Development Goals.

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Media Note: Dr. Ferdowsian is available for interviews upon request.