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Written statements exceptionally considered under provisional agenda item 3 Address by WHO Director-General devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic response in advance of the opening of the Health Assembly

STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY

Honorable chair, distinguished delegates,

The ISN urges the WHO and member states to recognize the impact of COVID-19 on patients with acute or permanent kidney failure, many of whom face interruption or unavailability of life-saving treatments such as dialysis and transplant. In those circumstances, unavailability of treatment will lead to severely increased mortality.

Preliminary data show that about 20-30% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 develop kidney failure, leading to a surge in requirement for dialysis. The increased demand of limited resources severely compromises treatments of this acute, potentially reversible complication of COVID-19. Further, the breakdown of health systems and disruptions due to lockdowns have had a severe impact on the ability of patients with advanced kidney disease to access regular dialysis. Even a brief interruption in chronic dialysis treatment is a death sentence. Patients with a kidney transplant may experience transplant rejection if deprived of immunosuppressive medications.

Hence, we call upon Member States and WHO to:

- Ensure a timely treatment of acute and chronic kidney disease including access to essential medications, dialysis equipment and supplies, and safe transplantation.
- Ensure availability of adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect the healthcare workers by overseeing their purchase, distribution, supply, and responsible use, and ensure rapid scaling-up of SARS-CoV2 testing capabilities.
- Ensure that patients with NCDs, who by being affected by severe co-morbidities including diabetes, malignancies and respiratory, cardiovascular, liver, and kidney diseases commonly experience worse outcomes, are protected and treated from the consequences of COVID-19 disease.
- Support collaborative research and collection, and widely share the results of all the actions taken, in order to generate guidelines and recommendations relevant to each national healthcare capacity.