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Welcome address from Professor Aurelijus Veryga, Member of Parliament, former Minister of Health of Lithuania

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Dear friends and colleagues, I have the honour and pleasure of welcoming you all to this third Calisia World Conference on Family Health. Special thanks are due to Professor Witold Zatoński, who is a very good friend of mine and who invited me to give this welcoming speech at the conference. Thank you, Professor. The last time we spoke, there was still the COVID pandemic. But even if the pandemic is now over, we still face challenges caused by the outbreak of this infectious disease. We are still dealing with increased anxiety and mental health issues among children and adults. We are still dealing with increased mortality due to delayed health care. We are seeing increased alcohol consumption. And we are facing such problems as a lack of trust in vaccines that have helped control infectious diseases that we thought had disappeared from our world but are now making a comeback. And we all need to find ways to solve these problems. It is very important that the subject of your conference is family health. Because today so many families have lost their homes, lost their relatives and loved ones because of Russia's war against Ukraine. And we must support Ukraine's fight against the aggressors, and we must support their victory, and we will have to support Ukraine's accession to the EU, as well as help solve their public health problems and help in other areas. This is very important. At this conference, you will also be talking about addictions and use of psychoactive

substances. Some of them are well known, like tobacco and alcohol, but today we are facing a new pandemic, we are facing a new challenge that probably no country even imagined could develop so quickly and on such a scale. I'm talking about new products that the tobacco industry has switched to very quickly. And this is not just heated tobacco products. I am talking mainly about e-cigarettes, I am talking about vaping. In Lithuania we already have a huge problem of children who are vaping unknown substances. In these liquids that they vape around the schools or even in school sometimes you can find very toxic elements, but you can also find illegal psychoactive substances such as tetrahydrocannabinol that could lead to psychotic events. But also those toxic substances sometimes cause very serious intoxication and children have already been hospitalized.

So, dear friends and colleagues, public health is a never ending story. If we start to believe that we have solved one problem, another appears. So I would like to wish you all a very good discussion, a very good conference in finding ways how to solve very important public health problems. Very good luck to all of you and thank you Professor Zatoński once again. Goodbye.

DISCLOSURE

The author reports no conflict of interest.