

Statement from the World Medical Association on item 6.15 “WHO’s response, and role as the health cluster lead, in meeting the growing demands of health in humanitarian emergencies”

Honorable Chair and Members of the Executive Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the role of WHO in emergencies. I am speaking on behalf of the World Medical Association. This statement is supported by the following organizations:

International Council of Nurses
World Confederation for Physical Therapy
International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims
IntraHealth International
African Medical and Research Foundation
American Public Health Association
American College of Physicians
Center for Public Health and Human Rights at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Doctors for Human Rights, UK
Human Rights Watch
Physicians for Human Rights
International Health Protection Initiative
International Federation of Health and Human Rights Organisations

We salute the Secretariat and Executive Board taking up the important report and resolution on the role of WHO in emergencies. I will focus my remarks on bringing WHO’s expertise to the pressing problem of attacks on health care, including health care workers, during situations of conflict.

A recent ICRC report concluded that, “in terms of number of people affected, violence, both real and threatened, against health-care workers, facilities and beneficiaries is one of the biggest, most complex, and yet most under-recognized humanitarian issues today.”

As Director-General Margaret Chan recognized in her address to the World Health Assembly last May, this problem needs the urgent attention of the global health community.

WHO’s expertise in health data collection, health systems and humanitarian coordination creates a leadership opportunity. WHO’s role is limited but essential: in coordination with relevant partners, WHO can develop and implement methods for systematic collection of data on attacks on health facilities, workers, and transport and patients in conflict areas.

We therefore support the resolution’s request that the Secretariat to provide leadership in developing methods for the collection and dissemination of data on attacks on health facilities, workers and patients where conflicts are occurring.

Thank you.