

**Greeting for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki at restaurant Pörssi on 11 November 2014**

***Check against delivery.***

Esteemed President of the World Medical Association, Dr. Xavier Deau, Chair of the Council of the World Medical Association, Dr. Mukesh Haikerwal, ambassadors, archiatre Risto Pelkonen, (minister Laura Räty), Ladies and Gentlemen,

Fifty years ago, in the summer of 1964, representatives of the medical profession gathered here in Helsinki.

Their mission was to give a response to some of the darkest events in world history and the role which physicians had played in it.

Their task was to draft a statement of ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects.

Out of these discussions arose the Declaration of Helsinki.

It has since been described as the most widely accepted guidance worldwide on medical research involving human subjects.

During the past 50 years theory has turned into practice. Guidelines and principles contained in the Declaration have been enshrined in national and international law and conventions regulating medical research today. For instance, in Finland ethical committees have been statutory since the late 1990s.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Regardless of their field of study, researchers have a great thirst for new knowledge. However, the pursuit of knowledge is never without risk. But we

will have no new knowledge without active research. Clinical medicine has made immense progress in the last 50 years. This would not have been possible without countless studies.

In general, ethical principles do not adapt in step with the opportunities offered by medicine to examine and treat patients. Modern methods for the management and analysis of information are at a completely different level than in the 1960s. These days, we place a particular emphasis on the right of individuals to control personal information. Despite the speed of development in medical science, the World Medical Association has managed to keep the Declaration up-to-date. And the Association has found a well-functioning compromise both in terms of manner and pace of updating. The Declaration provides a valuable guide for all parties involved in research.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Finland is known for its high-standard and equal health care, that serves all residents. Our country also provides a hospitable environment for medical research. Finns have a highly positive attitude towards such research. We have a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of human subjects. Efforts have also been made to enhance the development of research and innovation activities in the field.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Continuous, open discussion on the ethics of medicine and its basis in research is necessary to ensure the sustainable well-being of societies and people. The Declaration has proven to be a well-functioning cure, but we must continue with this treatment. The Helsinki Declaration became topical again a month ago, when the World Medical Association discussed issues related to the treatment of patients suffering from Ebola.

I hope that the Helsinki Declaration will continue to play a key role in enabling medical advances of a high standard in the years to come. I am delighted that you are celebrating the Declaration here, in its birthplace.

I wish the World Medical Association good health and longevity. I hope that you enjoy a memorable day here at restaurant Pörssi.