

May 2017

## **70th Session of the World Health Assembly**

### **Item 12.1: WHO response in severe, large-scale emergencies**

Honorable Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Medical Association, which represents more than 9 million physicians from 112 countries across the globe.

We welcome the WHO report of activities in response to major emergencies worldwide. As health professionals, we are alarmed not only by the number and severity of emergencies, but also by the fact that increasingly healthcare workers and facilities are becoming target of attacks in conflict situations, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law. We urge those involved in ongoing conflicts to protect civilians as well as healthcare capacities and to respect the ethical obligation of health personnel to treat all patients, irrespective of who they are. We call for the full implementation of the Ethical Principles of Health Care in Times of Armed Conflict and other Emergencies endorsed by civilian and military health-care organizations in 2015. We urge Governments to fulfil their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. Furthermore, we would like to stress the following:

- The WMA commends those countries that have committed resources for the urgent establishment of new treatment and isolation centres in the most heavily burdened countries and regions with new epidemics.
- The WMA calls upon the WHO to facilitate research into the timeliness and effectiveness of international interventions, so that planning and interventions in future health emergencies can be better informed.
- The WMA calls on national and local governments to ensure that disaster medicine training be included in the curricula of university and post-graduate courses in medicine.
- The WMA commends international solidarity particularly during emergencies. We urge countries to accept when needed, the presence of experienced foreign physicians who have demonstrated required qualifications, without any forms of discrimination.
- The WMA calls on member states to ensure the development and testing of disaster management plans for clinical care and public health including the ethical basis for delivering such plans.

Thank you.