THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.
L'ASSOCIATION MEDICALE MONDIALE, INC
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72ⁿᵈ World Health Assembly
11.2 Public health emergencies

Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Medical Association, representing 9 million physicians globally.

We support WHO and member states on prioritizing preparedness and response to public health emergencies. We regret however that situations of armed conflicts are not recognised in the report as a major risk factor for public health. Not only do we face an alarming number of critical emergencies, but also increasing attacks on healthcare professionals and facilities during armed conflicts, in violation with international humanitarian and human rights law. We urge member states to fulfil their obligations and to implement the UN Security Council Resolution 2286, condemning attacks and threats against medical personnel and facilities in conflict situations and demanding an end to impunity for those responsible.

We recall that the implementation and maintenance of Universal health Coverage and robust Primary Health Care systems should be the foundation for sustainable emergency preparedness, together with adequate funding at global, regional and national levels. In addition, a well-trained national health and emergency response force is central for rapid detection and response to health emergencies and prevention of epidemics and pandemics.

We would also like to emphasize the paramount importance of transparent and efficient governance structures and accountability of emergency preparedness and response, taking into consideration the ethical dilemmas that health professionals may experience in such contexts. The protection of civilians and healthcare capacities as well as the respect of medical neutrality constitute essential requirements of an adequate public health emergency policy. We call for the implementation of the Ethical Principles of Health Care in Times of Armed Conflict and other Emergencies, endorsed by civilian and military healthcare organizations in 2015.

Finally, in line with our policy on medical ethics in the event of disaster, we call for a system of triage to determine treatment priorities.

Thank you.