**WHO Executive Board 146th session**

**EB146/7.2 - Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCD)**

Distinguished delegates,

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

As physicians, we are at the forefront of the NCD epidemic. We experience the lived consequences of NCDs on our patients in our daily clinical practice.

We welcome the report on the Follow Up to the UN High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases and the annexes, including working towards a menu of policy options to tackle the air pollution epidemic.

The inclusion of recommendations on cost-effective mental health interventions is welcomed, particularly the emphasis on protecting human rights. This should be strengthened by incorporating references to the human resource needed to scale up access to treatment and diagnosis. Such access requires significant investment in educating physicians, from the primary care level to specialist psychiatrists.

Furthermore, although we welcome the new WHO-led SAFER initiative to foster the implementation of alcohol-control measures at country level, we have strong reservations on the validity to pursue a global dialogue with the alcohol industry, as recommended in the report. Such dialogue may counteract another report recommendation to protect alcohol policies from interference by commercial interests. Those interests have proven in the past to contradict the very essence of the strategy to serve public health. We see no evidence of usefulness for continuing dialogue with the alcohol industry.

Alcohol is responsible for significant mortality and morbidity around the world. There is no such thing as a safe amount of alcohol and actions to tackle harmful consumption are a responsibility of governments. We call on WHO to support member states moving forward to develop and implement strong regulatory and fiscal measures to reduce harmful consumption, including actions such as effective restrictions on advertising and minimum unit pricing.

Thank you.