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Update on implementation of resolution WHA73.1 on the COVID-19 response

The WMA welcomes the interim report by the Director-General on the implementation of resolution WHA73.1 and values the important efforts made on different fronts to provide a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to support Member States in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report, however, fails to address the deplorable impact of the outbreak on the very lives of health personnel in all regions of the world.

Since the beginning of pandemic, violence has expanded dramatically. Every day, our medical associations report incidents: threats, insults, stigmatisation from communities and States. In some countries, physicians are victims of reprisals for denouncing undignified working conditions, the blatant lack of medical equipment, or for criticizing their government pandemic responses.

Every day, we are seeing increasing infection rates of the virus amongst health personnel. Thousands have already lost their lives.

We call on WHO and Member States to recognise the protection of health personnel from violence and discrimination as an international priority requiring urgent actions, including:

- Adequate accountability mechanism by governments against perpetrators of violence against health personnel;
- Accurate and systematic data collection on violence incidents in relation to the pandemic to document the phenomenon;
- Transparent and effective information campaigns to keep the public informed and stop misinformation related to COVID-19 contamination;
- Ensuring the security of the supply chain of personal protective equipment for all health personnel on the frontline;
- The recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational illness, providing compensation and other support to health personnel in case of infection.

Violence against health personnel undermines the very foundations of health systems and ultimately impacts critically on patient's health. Physicians and other health personnel members need protection and safe working conditions in a solid health system. Member States are accountable for making this happen.
