



14 January 2021

148th WHO Executive Board session
Item 14.1 - COVID-19 Response

Distinguished Delegates,

The WMA welcomes the report by the Director-General providing an update on the Secretariat's activities to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. We take the measure of the very substantial charge to address this scourge and value the important efforts made on different fronts to provide a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to support Member States, including the promotion of evidence-based information about COVID-19 to limit the spread of false information.

We welcome multilateral solutions in the global battle against COVID-19, to ensure equitable, global distribution of a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine. No country should be left behind in the race to vaccinate its population against this global threat.

We regret however that the report fails to address the adverse impact of the outbreak on health personnel in all regions of the world. Various concurred information attest of alarming increased acts of violence: threats, insults, stigmatisation, undignified working conditions. Thousands health personnel have already lost their lives. This is unacceptable.

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;
- The recognition of COVID-19 as an occupational illness, providing compensation and other support to health personnel in case of infection;
- Accurate and systematic data collection on violence incidents in relation to the pandemic to document the phenomenon;
- Ensuring the security of the supply chain of personal protective equipment as well as safe and effective vaccine for all health personnel on the frontline.

Protection and safe working conditions of health personnel constitute indispensable requirements of a solid health system. Member States are accountable for making this happen.
