



14 January 2021

148th WHO Executive Board session
Item 16 – Social Determinants of Health

Distinguished Delegates,

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

We welcome WHO report aiming to incorporate a focus on Social Determinants of Health (SDH) into global and national health responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, and strongly support the emphasis put on the need for a multisectoral approach to policy decisions for all sectors affecting health, including environment, housing, transport, education, but also agriculture, trade or taxation. The pandemic responses must urgently be assessed and developed through a social, economic and environmental lens.

We support the [WHO manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19](#) launched last May: The WMA joined the over 40 millions of medical and health professionals raising their collective voice to G20 leaders, calling for such a recovery. The layers of this ongoing outbreak are many and amplified by inequality and underinvestment in public health systems. We believe that these harmful effects could have been partially mitigated, or possibly even prevented by adequate investments in pandemic preparedness, public health and environmental reforms. We call on Member States to develop solid mainstreaming mechanisms so that the short- and long-term public health repercussions of economic and social planned policies are carefully scrutinized before adoption. This is critical to develop a stronger, healthier and more resilient society based on equity and human rights values.

The WMA and its members are eager to take an active role in combating social and health inequities and barriers to obtaining health care, striving to enable physicians to provide equal, high quality health care to all. Adequate Universal Health Coverage in all countries should be a core objective as it will help reduce health inequity.

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