

**VALEDICTORY PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS DELIVERED ON FRIDAY,
OCTOBER 6, 2023, AT THE 74th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HELD AT THE RADISSON BLU HOTEL AND
CONVENTION CENTRE, KIGALI, RWANDA.**

**DR. OSAHON ENABULELE, M.B.B.S, MHPM, FWACP, FNMA
President, World Medical Association (2022-2023)**

Your Excellencies,
Honoured Guests,
The President-elect, Immediate Past President, Council Chair, the Secretary General, Council Members, and Members of the World Medical Association (WMA),
The President of the Nigerian Medical Association, Dr. Uche Rowland Ojinmah,
My lovely wife, Asso.Prof. Joan Enabulele, my Children, Efosa and Omorovbiye Enabulele,
Dr. Patrick Okundia, Former Commissioner for Health, Edo State, and family.
Dr. and Dr (Mrs) Ofunre Eboreime,
Colleagues, Friends, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

So soon, I am here again on this rostrum, but this time not to deliver an inaugural presidential address but a valedictory presidential address.

But before I proceed further, I wish to heartily welcome everyone to this auspicious ceremonial session of the 74th General Assembly of the World Medical Association.

I congratulate the Rwanda Medical Association (RMA) for courageously hosting this Assembly. As one who encouraged and supported the Rwanda Medical Association to bid for the hosting of this General Assembly, I feel very proud of them for their excellent hosting of the Assembly. On behalf of the WMA, I say thank you.

In some minutes from now, I will be handing over the reins of the WMA presidential office, along with this presidential medallion (and all the WMA regional spirits surrounding it) to a worthy successor, Dr. Lujain Al-Qodmani.

When I informed some of my colleagues and my fellow country men and women that my presidential hand over was at hand, many drew back in consternation, and asked why the tenure was so short. In my response to them, I told them that it may have appeared so short because of the fact that my one-year tenure was characterized by engagements and activities that were undertaken at a frenetic pace. I had to console them with the common saying that **it is not how long or short a tenure is, but how well the tenure was put to use.**

When two years ago, in 2021, I sought your collective democratic mandate to serve you as President of WMA, I had no illusions that we could address all the issues and resolve all the challenges facing the WMA and health systems, globally, in just one year.

In my inaugural presidential address, I had pledged to make great efforts to consolidate upon the work of my predecessor in office, Dr. Heidi Stensmyren, and to work collaboratively with other leaders and members of WMA, to propel a progressive leadership that undertakes initiatives and actions that will enhance the visibility and fortunes of WMA.

In line with my pledge, we truly consolidated upon our previous gains, and advanced initiatives that have transformed the WMA into a more visible organization that resonates positively in international circles, in the minds of her constituent members, and individual physicians around the world.

Importantly, we were able to undertake the following, amongst others:

(1) Intense Public Advocacy for Universal Health Coverage, Resilient Health Care Systems, and Resilient Health Workforce

In realization of the great need to reposition health care systems in a post-Covid-19 era, we intensified our advocacy efforts for the building of more resilient health care systems with a robust Physician-led multidisciplinary primary healthcare system, improved commitment to Universal Health Coverage, “One Health,” and greater investments in the well-being, working conditions, security and safety of the Human Resource for Health.

While we note some gains from our advocacy efforts, we nevertheless admit that health disparities and inequities still exist across the world. It is therefore imperative that we sustain our advocacy efforts.

It is also imperative that the resolutions of the 76th World Health Assembly and the recently held United Nations High Level Meetings on Universal Health Coverage and Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, **move beyond mere non-binding political declarations to real commitments** by governments to address the critical issues that confront global health, including the current global health workforce deficit of 10 million and the burgeoning phenomenon of brain drain, burnt-out, and violence in the health sector.

(2) Violence against Physicians and other Health Professionals

In the last one year, there were disturbing cases of violence against physicians and other health care professionals within and outside their workplaces. Everywhere I visited in the course of my tenure, there was an evident consensus that this issue of violence was of great concern to physicians.

I am happy to state that we took very decisive steps against these unwarranted assaults and violence against our colleagues, by showing solidarity with them and loudly condemning these despicable acts of violence which undermine our colleagues, our medical profession, patients, and the health care delivery systems of the affected countries.

While we must sustain our call on physicians to keep faith with our ethical codes, it is important to continuously demand of Governments and health institutions across the globe to take practical measures, including the enforcement of legal and policy instruments, and the recently launched Global Health and Care Worker Compact, to stop violence against physicians and other health professionals.

(3) Development of New Initiatives

(i) The WMA Roundtable and Leadership Series

One of the significant developments recorded during the tenure was the development of a new initiative called the **WMA Roundtable and Leadership Series**. This initiative seeks to

directly interface with physicians across the world, with the aim of improving their awareness and perception of the WMA, and impacting on their leadership, educational and professional development.

I am very happy to state that the maiden edition of the WMA Roundtable and Leadership Series which was centred on WMA's history, scope of work, membership, and role of National Medical Associations, was successfully held on Friday, September 29, 2023. As observed by most participants, this maiden session was quite revealing and provided an added spark to further propel the initiative.

(ii) **The WMA Global Healthcare Excellence Award Scheme**

It is my hope that the proposal on the WMA Global Healthcare Excellence Award Scheme will some day be approved for expression in the WMA, particularly as it is primarily aimed at recognizing the sense of duty, commitment and excellence of physicians and others who contribute to the development of healthcare systems, with the overall aim of motivating physicians and strengthening healthcare systems. I thank Prof. Joseph Ana and others who worked with me to develop the proposed scheme.

(4) **Defence of our colleagues in the Turkish Medical Association**

During my tenure, we showed massive solidarity with our colleagues facing assaults from repressive regimes, including the Dr. Sebnem Korur Fincanci-led leadership of the Turkish Medical Association (TMA), who have been facing sustained assaults on their fundamental human rights, their medical professional autonomy and clinical independence.

As a mark of solidarity with our colleagues in the TMA, I visited Ankara, capital of Turkey, where I physically witnessed with sadness, the court trial of leaders of the Turkish Medical Association that took place on Thursday, June 22, 2023, in the Ankara Diskapi Court House, 31st Civil Court, in Ankara, Turkey. **This unjust trial of our progressive colleagues was simply because they voiced out their opinions against the ills in the system.**

Before appearing in court, and with a strong reliance on my background experiences in struggles of this nature, I directly addressed a rally in support of our troubled colleagues, within the precincts of the court house. I also addressed a press conference to drive home our case against the oppression of our colleagues in Turkey.

I am happy to note that our physical presence added to the atmosphere in the court and sent a loud signal to the Turkish Government and the Judiciary that the WMA was robustly in support of our colleagues.

I urge us to remain united in our struggle against oppression of our colleagues and to stoutly resist attempts at undermining their fundamental human and labour rights, as well as their medical professional autonomy and clinical independence.

(5) **Improved Sense of Belonging**

In line with our commitment to improve the sense of belonging amongst our members, we undertook several outreaches during my tenure.

I had the privilege to visit some National Medical Associations and regional bodies, including, amongst others:

- the Swedish Medical Association,
- Japan Medical Association,
- Taiwan Medical Association,
- Israeli Medical Association,
- German Medical Association,
- British Medical Association,
- Turkish Medical Association,
- CMAAO,
- And my home base- Nigerian Medical Association.

I thank them for according me their warm hospitality during these visits.

I must admit that these visits, though gruelling, were important learning points and a source of value addition to the WMA, particularly as it helped to reinforce our oneness as professionals, and the commitment of our members to the WMA.

I cannot easily forget my experiences in Turkey when I visited the earthquake regions of Adana and Hatay Cities of Turkey, on Friday, June 23 and Saturday, June 24, 2023, respectively. My visit to Hatay city was particularly revealing as I came in close contact with many displaced families, and orphans, living in various shelter camps and struggling for basic needs of life. I witnessed many devastated communities and had personal interactions with those who lost their loved ones.

I was particularly moved by the sad case of a Physician who lost his wife and children during the earthquake, but despite this, was still providing healthcare to other injured victims.

I once again express our deep sympathies and condolences to all those who lost loved ones in recent natural and man-made disasters. We pray for the eternal repose of the souls of all those lost in the wake of these disasters.

(6) Partnerships and Collaborations

In the last one year, we worked hard to strengthen our association with our collaborating partners and bodies, including the World Health Organization.

One of my first assignments was to visit the World Health Organization's (WHO) headquarter in Geneva, to join our partners in the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA), to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus-led World Health Organization on:

- Health workforce,
- Universal Health Coverage,
- Non-Communicable Diseases,
- and Aging populations,

We also played our roles in the WHO 5th Global Forum on Human Resource for Health, the 76th World Health Assembly, and the High-Level Meetings of the 78th United Nations General Assembly.

We sustained our associations with the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Veterinary Association, World Psychiatry Association, amongst others. **It is my hope that in due course, we would have a formal partnership with the Commonwealth Medical Association.**

(7) Review of the Declaration of Helsinki

Our internal work on revision of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) continued to make progress during the period under review with hosting of exciting and productive regional revision sessions.

I commend the Dr. Jack Resneck Jr-led Review Committee for the commitment and progress thus far.

(8) Associate Members and Junior Doctors Network

I must appreciate the sustained progress made during the tenure by both the Associate Members (AM) and the Junior Doctors Network (JDN). I commend the Dr. Jacque Hailer-led leadership of Associate Members and the Dr. Uche Arum-led leadership of the JDN for engineering progressive leadership of the respective bodies, with value added to the WMA.

(9) Ukraine Help Fund

In solidarity with our colleagues in Ukraine, we sustained the Ukraine Help Fund which has been a great source of support for delivery of medical care in Ukraine.

On behalf of the WMA, I wish to thank all NMAs and other bodies who continue to make financial donations to the Fund.

CHALLENGES

(1) Awareness and perception of WMA amongst individual physicians and citizens.

Despite existing for over 75 years, there is still need to create greater awareness amongst individual physicians and citizens, of what the WMA does and stands for. There is need to also deconstruct the wrong perception in some quarters that the WMA is a missionary body and that the office of the WMA President is a salaried office.

(2) Relationship with World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (UN).

While the WMA has maintained her international relationship with the UN Bodies, including the WHO, I wish to observe that the attitude of these bodies to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), including the WMA, has been very disappointing. This certainly needs to change, if the expected dividends from such relationships are to be reaped.

I consider unfortunate, in fact totally unacceptable, a situation where CSOs like the WMA are left to struggle for severely limited space with others, to advance their positions within these global bodies. Sometimes, the WMA is left on the fringes, and only allowed to make their depositions within 1 or 2 minutes.

The question that therefore needs to be addressed is whether global health can truly be advanced without according bodies like the WMA, their rightful place in such bodies. We are serious about engagement; but are they serious in their desire to engage with us?

APPRECIATION

At this juncture, I wish to appreciate our almighty creator and ever faithful God for granting me abundant grace, protection and blessings, in the last 3 decades of my medical leadership journey.

That I rose from the very beginning of our leadership ranks in the University/Medical School, through State, National, African, and Commonwealth levels, up to the global level, can only be through the abiding grace of God Almighty.

I thank all those who supported me in the course of my journey to the exalted office of WMA President, as well as those who supported our work during my tenure, including my friends in the 4th estate of the realm. Without their support our work would have been difficult.

I am thankful to the WMA Executive Committee and Council for the support offered me during my tenure. I must admit that I was privileged to work with a unique set of committed, diligent and patriotic officers of the WMA. I cannot thank enough, our Secretary General, Dr. Otmar Kloiber, and the entire WMA Secretariat Staff. Their unflagging commitment, sense of duty, industry, passion, and support, was simply marvellous! **They are the best ever!**

I dedicate this day to my parents, who nurtured and prepared me for my leadership and career path in life. My dear mother, Evangelist Rachael Ayi Enabulele, a disciplinarian, would have wished to be here, but for certain circumstances.

My late father, Elder Jonathan Igbineweka Enabulele JP, had truly looked forward to a day like this, but never had the opportunity to witness this moment, as he passed on in the year 2013 when I was serving as President of the Nigerian Medical Association. Daddy, may your great soul continue to rest in Perfect Peace! My profound gratitude goes to them.

Now, to my immediate family, my wife, Asso.Prof. Joan Enabulele, and my lovely three children, Efosa, Omorovbiye, and Osarumwense Enabulele, what can I really say to them? They have been a great source of strength. Their support was a vital ingredient that propelled me to continuously oil and drive the engine of growth and development in the WMA. I appreciate their patience, tolerance, care, love, and understanding. They have always tolerated my absence from home. But the good news is that I will soon be coming back home.

I specially thank the President of the Nigerian Medical Association, Dr. Uche Ojinmah, all past Presidents of NMA, and indeed all members of the Nigerian Medical Association for the varied levels of support extended to me. I thank all physicians and leaders of National Medical Associations in Africa, and indeed across the globe, for their support.

I acknowledge the Lion Killer's Team, my Presidential Team, family and friends.

I must specially acknowledge the presence and support of my special Guests, colleagues, friends, and well-wishers who travelled to Kigali, to witness my valedictory session.

I thank the **Governor** of my State, Edo State, Mr. Godwin Nogheghase Obaseki, and the State Government, for their support. I thank our King and Oba of Benin, His Royal Majesty, Omo N'Oba N'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo, Oba Ewuare II OGIDIGAN CFR, and His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, CFR, mni, The Sultan of Sokoto, for their support.

I am profoundly grateful to Sir.Chief.Dr. Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion CON, CFR, The Esama of Benin, **the Manager of Independent Television and Radio, Engr. Elvis Obaseki**, and all the Staff of ITV Benin, for their unparalleled support.

I thank the Chief Medical Director (Prof.Darlington Obaseki), Management Team, and Staff of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (where I practice), and the Chief Medical Director and former Management Board of Lagos University Teaching Hospital (where I served as a Management Board Member) for their support during my 1-year tenure.

My profound gratitude goes to my Head of Department of Family Medicine, Dr. Adewole Afolabi, and all staff of the Department, for their rare understanding and support.

CONCLUSION

Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
It took me over 15years of engagement within the WMA and 4 attempts at this office, before getting to the very top. **I therefore want to once again express my eternal gratitude to you, for the great privilege and honour extended to me, the very first Nigerian and West African physician, to serve as President of WMA.**

I hope I met your expectations!

I hope your judgement would be that **“I came, I saw, and truly acquitted myself.”**

As I formally hand over the baton, I wish to assure our members that I will continue to totally commit myself to the mission, vision, and strategic objectives of the WMA.

I also wish to once again urge our members to remain faithful and committed to the WMA. Our members should always remember that **“for the WMA to be that truly strong body they desire it to be, its tree must be watered by their collective efforts.”**

I cannot end this address without paying special tribute to our colleagues who lost their lives in the last one year. May their great souls rest in perfect peace.

I wish my successor in office, Dr. Lujain Al-Qodmani, success in her tenure.

I pray God to grant you all journey mercies back to your respective homes.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Long live the World Medical Association!!!



Dr. Osahon ENABULELE, M.B.B.S, MHPM, FWACP, FNMA.
President, World Medical Association.
Friday, October 6, 2023.