

# Inaugural Speech of Dr. Jacqueline W. Kitulu, President, World Medical Association 2025/2026

## Delivered at the WMA General Assembly, Porto, Portugal – 10th October 2025

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Distinguished colleagues, esteemed delegates, honored guests, and fellow physicians around the world—

It is with profound humility and deep gratitude that I accept the presidency of the World Medical Association.

This moment is not mine alone... It reflects the collective commitment of physicians across every continent who devote their skill, intellect, and compassion to improving human health.

I begin by honoring those who have gone before me. I pay special tribute to Dr. Margaret Mungherera, the first African woman to serve as President of the WMA. Her courage and vision lit the path that I now walk, and she remains a constant inspiration on this journey.

I extend thanksgiving to my village, my husband and sons, my parents and siblings, and my extended family who are present here today. Your love and support have carried me to this moment. I also give special thanks to the Kenya Medical Association, which nominated me, supported me, and continues to walk alongside me. And above all, I thank God—who sets all things in His time, and who has positioned me for this role, for impact, for the people of the world.

This inauguration is not ceremonial—it is a call to action. During my presidency, I will advocate for three central priorities: **fostering inter-regional collaboration, strengthening mentorship and capacity building, and championing global policy advocacy for primary healthcare.**

## **1. Fostering Inter-Regional Collaboration**

The WMA represents 115 member associations across diverse systems and realities. Yet our challenges—pandemics, non-communicable diseases, climate change, and workforce migration—are shared.

Inter-regional collaboration is not an option... it is an ethical imperative.

When Ebola struck West Africa, the world learned that siloed responses cost lives. During COVID-19, knowledge-sharing across continents saved lives: clinical lessons from Asia informed European and American hospitals, while vaccination strategies from South America guided African programs. These examples remind us that no region holds a monopoly on wisdom.

I will advocate for:

1. Global Learning Hubs to rapidly share best practices on preparedness, digital health, and resilience.
2. Virtual exchange platforms connecting physicians and young doctors across continents.
3. Unified advocacy at the WHO, the UN, and multilateral organizations so our voice influences global health policy.

Importantly, I will also work toward an active and operational Coalition of African National Medical Associations—CANMA. A strong, united CANMA will not only strengthen Africa's role within the WMA but also enrich global dialogue by bringing forward the lessons, innovations, and perspectives from African physicians.

## **2. Mentorship and Capacity Building**

Mentorship has been transformative in my own life— from being one of only ten women in a class of one hundred medical students, to serving as the first female President of the KMA. I am here today because of the mentors who believed in me, guided me through moments of doubt, and helped me reach this apical point.

I will advocate for:

1. *Expanding the Junior Doctors Network so every young physician has access to structured mentorship.*

*2. Leadership and advocacy training—in policy, negotiation, and systems thinking.*

*3. Regional exchange fellowships to foster cross-border learning and innovation.*

Mentorship is a two-way street: senior doctors share wisdom, while younger colleagues bring fresh perspectives. Together, we secure the future of medical leadership.

### **3. Global Policy Advocacy for Primary Healthcare**

Primary healthcare remains the cornerstone of resilient systems, yet it is under-resourced in many countries. Policies adopted in Geneva or New York hold little value unless they translate into stronger clinics, more equitable healthcare access, and healthier communities.

I will advocate for:

*1. Investment in the health workforce—fair pay, training, and safe working conditions.*

*2. Inclusion of physicians' voices in primary healthcare reform, ensuring policies reflect realities on the ground.*

*3. Linking global commitments to local action, supporting member associations to hold governments accountable.*

A motivated, empowered workforce is our greatest defense against the challenges of today and tomorrow.

### **Looking Ahead**

Even as we focus on these three pillars, we must also prepare for wider challenges:

Health in conflict zones: In Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine, health facilities and workers are under direct attack. These are grave violations of international humanitarian law and affronts to the principle of medical neutrality. The WMA must remain steadfast in defending this principle and amplifying the voices of colleagues who serve under fire.

Ethical leadership as AI and digital health reshape medicine.

Climate change as a determinant of health that demands physician advocacy.

Digital innovation that must be guided by equity and privacy principles.

As physicians, our highest calling is to the art of medicine and the healing of those in need. It transcends politics and the divisions that polarize societies worldwide. In these times of uncertainty, let us remember that our strength lies in unity, collegiality, and shared purpose. Under the umbrella of the World Medical Association, we stand together as one global community, committed not to political agendas but to the enduring values of compassion, science, and care. Let us move forward united and steadfast in our mission.

### **Closing Call to Action**

Colleagues... we became physicians to serve humanity.  
The challenges before us are formidable—  
but so is our collective strength.

Let us:

Build stronger regional and global collaborations, including an operational CANMA.

Mentor the next generation generously.

Advocate for primary healthcare as the foundation of equitable health.

History will not judge us by the offices we held—  
but by the lives we touched and the systems we strengthened.

Together, let us ensure that the World Medical Association remains a beacon of ethics, solidarity, and advocacy—serving humanity with integrity and hope.

Thank you.