

20 May 2014

67th WHA

Item 14.3: Addressing the global challenge of violence, in particular against women and girls

Honourable members of the World Health Assembly,

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of World Medical Association (WMA), the International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA), the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) and the Medical Women International Association (MWIA) representing millions of female & male doctors as well as young people worldwide.

We welcome the report addressing the global challenge of violence, in particular against women and girls, which features the magnitude of the global scourge of the phenomenon. We deplore the costs of violence, its devastating health consequences on society as a whole. Violence against women is a manifestation of structural inequalities between women and men. We underscore the crucial need for policies addressing specifically violence from a gender perspective.

Furthermore, although we support WHO's activities to combat violence through multi-sectorial approaches, we believe that there is more to be done. Physicians have a unique role to play in combating this, one of the most severe human rights violations. They see the health problems individuals face in the context of that person, their family, community, workplace and all the other complex factors that affect their health and their recovery from illness. The views of physicians must therefore be incorporated systematically into any comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to violence.

Physicians and their health professionals' colleagues are at the frontline in the provision of comprehensive services in support of victims, ensuring that violence is identified, documented and victims rehabilitated. We believe that specific, quality and affordable training must be further developed in medical schools and in the framework of Continuing Professional Development. Such a requirement should be reflected by Member States, WHO and other international agencies in their commitments to stop violence.

Finally, given the alarming rate of sexual violence in humanitarian emergency situations, we demand of Members States, WHO and other relevant UN agencies that they strengthen their response to violence against women and girls in situations of conflicts, as a matter of urgency.

Thank you

Clarisse Delorme

