



The High-Level Commission report on Health Employment and Economic Growth

Honourable Chairperson, Distinguished Delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Medical Association WMA, which represents 9 million physicians from 111 countries worldwide.

WMA welcomes the report of the High Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth- working for Health and Growth and the clear statement it has made on investing in health. Health care itself can be strong pillar of any economy. A strong and equitable health care system, not only delivers better health for the people, but also offers secure jobs, helps the country to better overcome economic crises and be prepared to respond to catastrophes and contributes to social justice and social stability. Recognizing the importance of the health workforce and the call for investment into the workforce are crucial components to achieve the goal of universal health coverage and the SDGs.

Since many years WMA is advocating for the economic and social arguments to invest in health at various high level meetings and through our national members. The South African Medical Association was closely involved in drafting the High Level Commission report. At our last General Assembly in October 2016 we discussed how WMA and its members could support the implementation of the report.

WMA supports all 10 recommendations made by the commission and would like to highlight which of the 10 ones are especially important for WMA and where we will focus our activities on:

1. Recommendation 2: Gender and women's rights

WMA and its members ensures that the gender perspective is integrated in health and economic policy developments, including while reflecting on health workforce reform. This is of special importance since the majority of the health workforce is female.

2. Recommendation 3: Education, training and skills:

To deliver good quality care it is of importance to have a well-trained health workforce with the ability to receive continuous medical education as a lifelong learning approach with mentoring in the health care setting.

Health is profoundly shaped by factors outside the health care sector and reducing health inequality requires the involvement of sectors outside healthcare is essential.

But there are also significant and important actions that health professionals can take to help improve the conditions in which people live. WMA together with the Institute of Health Equity developed a report and an online course on Social Determinants of Health for physicians. Both can be found on the WMA webpage together with other online courses free of charge for physicians. Besides this WMA is organizing an annual leadership course for physicians in leadership positions together with the University of INSEAD.

3. Recommendation 4 and 9: Health service delivery and organization and International Migration:

WMA is committed to improving the health of populations worldwide through the efficient, effective and equitable delivery of preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health care. WMA advocates for a holistic health care system with a focus on primary health care as the core part of comprehensive health care systems, including health promotion, prevention, secondary, tertiary care and rehabilitation, respecting persons at the center of medicine. In such a health system physicians work in a health care team where each profession cooperated within their scope of practice and with respect for the expertise of other members of the team.

Ensuring the basic rights for health professionals and decent working conditions are essential to realizing many of the other critical components of the report. Successful recruitment and retention of health care workers among member state is contingent on effective recognition and protection of these fundamental rights - particularly a safe working environment. This will be even more important with the actual demographic trends indicating a high demand in the health workforce. WMA together with the other professions of the World Health Professions Alliance developed the Positive Practice Environment Campaign which gives examples what health care settings could do to foster satisfaction and resilience.

WMA underlines the key role of professional organizations in health employment policy, including their role in the regulation of the profession. It is imperative to involve them in policy decisions throughout the policy process.

4. Recommendation 6: Crises and humanitarian settings

With the trend of growing violence against the health workforce, WMA highlights the importance of the right of health care workers to safe and decent working environments, free from discrimination, coercion and violence . Since many years WMA is a close partner of the Health Care in Danger initiative lead by the ICRC aiming at protecting health care personnel, patients and facilities from violence. Together with ICRC and other key health partners, we work to denounce unacceptable situations where health care becomes the deliberate target of conflict, in flagrant violation with international humanitarian and human rights rules.

Thank you very much.