

World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)



Constituency statement to the WHO Executive Board 154 (January 2024)

Item 14: WHO's work in health emergencies

Before I start reading the constituency statement, these are the non-state actors co-signing the statement:

- *FDI World Dental Federation*
- *FIP International Pharmaceutical Federation*
- *ICN International Council of Nurses*
- *WMA World Medical Association*
- *World Physiotherapy*

I am speaking on behalf of the International Council of Nurses, which is part of the World Health Professions Alliance. The WHPA represents over 41 million dentists, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists and physicians around the world, and has a Memorandum of Understanding with WHO.

Our remarks will address WHO's work on health emergencies at the global level, with a focus on the WHO Pandemic Agreement negotiations.

We appreciate that the Alliance has been able to strengthen the Agreement by highlighting the catastrophic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health and care workforce, as documented in the WHPA-WHO ground-breaking report "What the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed: the findings of five global health workforce professions".¹ Thanks to our input, there is a new clause in the Agreement requiring parties to protect the safety of health professionals in emergencies, including priority access to PPE and preventing violence against health personnel.

We commend governments for retaining specific language on the continuation of essential health services, including oral healthcare, across the continuum of care, during pandemic preparedness, response, and recovery.

We also appreciate the focus in the Agreement on health systems strengthening, and on safeguarding, protecting, investing in and sustaining an interdisciplinary health and care workforce. Without a properly supported workforce, there can be no robust pandemic response, and no UHC.

¹ <https://www.whpa.org/news-resources/news/20230329-documenting-evidence-covid-19-impact-health-professionals>

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However, we are concerned that the Agreement does not require ethical international recruitment, decent work, the due protection of employment, economic and social rights, consistent with applicable international obligations and guidelines, such as

- WHO Workforce Support and Safeguard List
- Working for Health 2022-2030 Action Plan
- Global Health and Care Worker Compact
- Global Code of Practice for Recruitment of Health Personnel

as well as WHPA's Positive Practice Environments framework.²

WHO's work in emergencies, and beyond, must aim to create a sustainable health workforce by establishing effective health workforce planning, education and training, and retention strategies that are the backbone of the health system and will reduce the need to recruit international health personnel.

2259 characters/328 words

Target: approximately 2200 characters (abt 330 words)

² <https://www.whpa.org/activities/positive-practice-environments>