Dear chairman, honorable members of the World Health Assembly,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of four health professions - dentists, nurses, physicians and pharmacists - which together represent national associations of health professions in more than 150 countries, and bring together more than 25 millions health professionals.

We feel strongly that too many countries have desperate shortages of health care professionals, impacting negatively on patient outcomes and research capacities. The reasons are complex - but our understanding is the poor quality of most healthcare work environments that are undermining performance and driving health professionals away. Together with our national health professional associations in countries, we assign high priority to supporting and increasing professional training opportunities and to provide incentives for the retention of health professionals.

Therefore, in the context of the Global Strategy, having reviewed the secretariat reports on this agenda item, we are extremely concerned that the lack of human resources for pharmaceutical clinical research, development, manufacture, distribution, regulatory and health care services delivery will be a critical barrier to any efforts to implement this global strategy. As such, recognizing the fact there are already a number of agreed elements and inter-related indicators of the global strategy on building and improving innovative capacity in clinical research, including transfer of technology and the establishment of tools to ensure quality and effective regulatory frameworks for health products and technology, we would like to urge WHO and all Member States to give focused attention and targeted investment to strengthening of the pharmaceutical workforce and sector, supporting implementation of Element 6.

Finally, we take this opportunity to inform you that the International Pharmaceutical Federation will be publishing the 2009 Global Pharmacy Workforce Report in September and has conducted a 55 country study of pharmaceutical workforce development which indicates inadequate workforce scale up and persisting workforce distribution imbalances, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The evidence collected emphasizes a need for greater investment in scaling up education and training, institutional capacity building for education and research and putting in pharmaceutical human resource plans.

Thank you for your attention.