World Medical Association Joint Intervention:
International Council of Nurses, ICN
World Dental Federation, FDI
International Pharmaceutical Federation, FIP
World Medical Association, WMA

124th Session of the WHO Executive Board
Geneva, January 2009

Honourable Members of the Executive Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Medical Association, the International Council of Nurses, the International Pharmaceutical Federation and the World Dental Federation, which form together the World Health Professional Alliance WHPA. The Alliance represents national associations in more than 150 countries, and the collective views of more than 25 million health professionals, working together to achieve the highest possible standards of care, ethics, education and health-related human rights for all people.

We welcome the report by the secretariat on primary health care, including health system strengthening and support the agenda for action addressing health inequalities through non-universal coverage and the demand for people centred care approach. While the report stresses the importance of the comprehensive development of health care systems for the provision of health care to people, we would like to call your attention to the importance of well functioning health care systems for economic development. Not only is the promotion and protection of the health of the people essential to sustained economic and social development and contributes to a better quality of life and to world peace, additionally have the health care sectors meanwhile developed to major if not largest sectors of national economies.

Beyond the humanitarian dimension and beyond the importance for the productivity of the people in many successful economies health care systems are the dynamic pillars of the economic system.

Building health care systems around primary care and considering that as the core of a comprehensive health system approach is a meaningful and rational strategy. We welcome the new strategy: it will help to deliver proper treatment to severely ill patients, it will also provide new perspectives for health care professionals in their home countries and it will strengthen economic and social development.

Primary health care forms an integral part both of the country’s health system, of which it is the central function and main focus, and of the overall social and economic development of the community. Primary care brings health care as close as possible to where people live and work, and constitutes the first element of a continuing health care process. Therefore we welcome that WHO now sees primary health care as sustained by integrated, functional and mutually supportive referral...
systems, leading to the progressive improvement of comprehensive health care for all, and giving priority to those most in need. We see primary health care as a policy direction for all countries at all levels of development.

In Conclusion the Alliance would like to emphasise the need to broaden the strategic directions and priorities of the report. Providing universal care will truly only be possible when health care systems are build up as comprehensive system founded on strong primary care structures but not limited to it. This will give all severely ill patients a chance for treatment, it will retain and attract health professionals and is the basis for a sustainable economic development.

I thank you for your attention.