



World Federation of Public Health Associations

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Public Health, Peace & Human Rights

Adopted by the WFPHA at its
37th Annual Meeting on May 19, 2003
in Geneva Switzerland.

The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) at its Annual Meeting of 19 May, 2003, in Geneva has taken notice of the Declaration of Skopje on Public Health, Peace & Human Rights of the Public Health Collaboration Network in South Eastern Europe, of December, 2001 (1). It highly values the constructive spirit of collaboration and peace building reflected in this declaration, issued in one of the most conflict-ridden regions of the world, and strongly supports its conclusions. Based on the Declaration of Skopje, the WFPHA issues the same declaration, but modifies it so as to extend its application to all regions and populations in conflict worldwide.

The World Federation of Public Health Associations engages the good offices of public health in promoting peace, preventing violence and to make our own unique contribution to the building of a more equal, stable and democratic world. We do so in significant and congenial consort, and in unimpeachable union with the international community.

WE BELIEVE that the future well-being of our one and only world, Mother Earth, resides in the prevention of violence; the eradication of poverty, and the promotion of democratic principles. Furthermore, we believe that public health constitutes one basic element and practical ingredient, for mankind's hope for the future.

WE BELIEVE that the international community has the necessary wisdom 'to take arms against the sea of troubles' of growing population vulnerability, in order to respond to the legitimate demands for the betterment of the world's dispossessed and prevent desperation and poverty to act through violent means. In addition, the international community has wealth to spare and power enough to act.

As health professionals WE ARE GOVERNED by our professional code of ethics emerging from the value system of public health and not by any political dogma, party politics, influential person, or force. In our quest for a better world, we are obligated to disseminate our sense of values and to urge their widespread adoption and implementation.

WE SUPPORT the appropriate and effective nullification of all serious threats or enemies of democracy and civilization and we promote peace and tolerance through education of health professionals, service to society, and research into health disturbance from conflict, poverty, and vulnerability of the population.

WE ARE CONVINCED that public health has important social roles for the advancement of practical techniques for disease and injury prevention, as an early warning system for sudden or gradual changes in vulnerability; for the protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups; in fighting the scourges of bioterrorism, substance abuse and drug trafficking; in addressing the problems of refugees, any kind of torture, prisoners of war and starvation; in combating hate organizations and their ideologies, as well as all forms of humiliation, abuse, and the trafficking in human beings.

We therefore STATE OUR RESOLVE to integrate the issues of war and peace and human rights into the practice and scholarship of public health, and we call upon all national Public Health Associations and teaching institutions of public health worldwide to take the appropriate steps accordingly.



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As a basis for reaching these goals, we have enunciated the following principles, beliefs, truths and resolutions.

Principles:

- In recognition of our belief in the sanctity of all life and the wealth of diversity found in our one and only world, Planet Earth, given to us by our forefathers.
- In acknowledgment of our moral obligation to preserve and improve our one and only world for the benefit of our offspring and our children's children who will inherit it.
- In the certainty that people of goodwill everywhere are bound by their common humanity and a great resolve to build a better world.
- In the certain knowledge that peaceful development, equal opportunity for life, its maximum fulfillment and the general social well-being of all, are the prerequisites for a better future world.

Resolutions:

WE ARE FIRMLY RESOLVED to improve the infrastructure for public health laboratory and surveillance systems, reinforce standards of scholarship of its professionals, educate decision makers for policy and to work towards the mitigation and dissolution of social tension and exclusion and the reduction of vulnerability of our populations.

WE ARE DEDICATED to research and analyze the social root causes and health deficits of vulnerability, formulate evidence based solutions for health gain, and strengthen and reformulate public health as a catalyst for peace, a factor in economic growth, in the spirit of solidarity and social justice. We are also dedicated to develop new curricula and forms of human resource training relevant to the special health needs of regions in conflict that integrate issues of peace and human rights within the framework of public health.

Furthermore, we are deeply committed to reinforcing existing institutions and schools of public health, and supporting new ones in regions not sufficiently served, as interdisciplinary agents of society.

WE PLEDGE our support for the health and social well-being of all peoples entrusted to us, in sickness and in health and in all of their human dimensions; physical, mental, social and spiritual, without prejudice, regardless of hierarchical position, belief or nationality.

WE REJECT in one voice any narrowness of approach, or restrictive academic demarcation of disciplines as well as all forms of discrimination by ethnicity, religion, gender, age, or social group.

WE ARE RESOLVED, READY AND PREPARED to collaborate with policy makers within our regions, the international community and with all health care professionals, in order to set the necessary conditions for equal access to quality health care, to reduce and control environmental damage and to involve public health in the just management of complex humanitarian emergencies.

To these ends, we set before you the WFPHA Declaration on Public Health, Peace, and Human Rights as an initial step that can help fashion a more equal, stable and democratic world.

Conclusions:

This Declaration is an expression of the social conscience of public health. It is appropriate to note that it was initially formulated in Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia, a country in a state of pre-conflict and in the heart of the Balkans. It proclaims the union between public health, peace and human rights, in close keeping with the work and value systems of the United Nations, World Health Organization, the Council of Europe and other international bodies. It represents the hope and the promise of public health as a



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more cognitive element of society. It is an expression of the commitment of professionals of public health everywhere to make a difference in the health status of the peoples in regions in conflict.

We call upon the decision makers within and outside of regions in conflict of our one and only world at large, to constructively adopt our Declaration. Adopting it as originating from the heart of the Balkans, we the representatives of public health, urge that its principles and truths be effectively integrated into social policy for the benefit of all mankind and ask the international community to join hands with the institutions and practitioners of public health in South Eastern Europe and other regions in conflict, to transpose its contents into a practical force for change.

Together, we can build a better world, closer to the human heart's desire.

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(1) Resulting from deliberations and position papers of the Public Health Collaboration Network in South Eastern Europe (PH-SEE) of the Stability Pact, in Zagreb (July 2001), in Ohrid, Macedonia (September 2001), and in Skopje (December 2001). Published in the Croatian Medical Journal 43(2):105-106, 2002 (<http://www.cmj.hr/index.php?P=846>) for the participants of the South Eastern European Conference on Public Health and Peace, Skopje, December 6-8, 2001, by Doncho Donev, Skopje, Ulrich Laaser, Bielefeld, and Jeffrey Levett, Athens