A Global Charter for the Public’s Health

“Taking action to improve the public’s health is set to move into a higher gear”, according to Dr. Mengistu Asnake, President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA). “Releasing a template for action to improve health in the modern world makes a timely contribution”, he adds.

In this context, WFPHA has developed the A Global Charter for the Public’s Health (GCPH) as the main output of its collaboration plan with the World Health Organization (WHO) to adapt today’s public health to its global context in the light of and in conjunction with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Political leaders increasingly perceive health as being crucial to achieving growth, development, equity and stability throughout the world. Health is now understood as a product of complex and dynamic relations generated by numerous determinants at different levels of governance.

The proposed GCPH brings together the best of all existing models and provides a comprehensive, clear and flexible framework that can be applied globally and within individual countries, whether low, middle or high-income. For Prof. Bettina Borisch, WFPHA Executive Director, “the Charter intends to bring a new ‘bottom-up way of implementation that takes into account local, regional and global perspectives’”.

“Besides the fundamentals of public health, which are related to things like epidemics, statistics, clean water and sanitation - an all-inclusive view, especially a political one, will be the focus the Charter can bring forward”, emphasizes Prof. Borisch.

Engaging governments in this process highlighting the idea that health is part of a broader process will allow every country to develop a stronger health system that can guarantee not only healthcare but especially preventable and sustainable solutions.

From the national public health associations perspective, “in the moment the world adopts the SDGs, the GCPH is an important and timely initiative to provide a common framework in order to help countries to develop strategies to strengthen healthcare systems, making them more responsive and more egalitarian”, emphasizes a representative of ABRASCO, the Brazilian Association of Collective Health.

“Public health associations across the world will be advocating with Governments encouraging them to take into account the impact of social, environmental and behavioral health determinants. These include economic constraints, living conditions, demographic changes and unhealthy lifestyles in many of the World Health Organization Member States”, concludes WFPHA vice president Prof. Michael Moore.

The Declaration of Alma-Ata on Primary Health Care in 1978 and The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986 had a major influence on improving health throughout the world. The intention of The Charter is to take the next step in providing a succinct and practical implementation guideline to public health associations to work with other Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), universities, civil society and governments to plan and implement strategies for better health outcomes across the globe.

This is the beginning of a long process embracing the conceptualization of global public health and the development of strategic capacities for all professionals that will be part of a new health era, more dedicated to preventive solutions.

The Charter will be officially launched during the World Health Assembly at the side event “Global and Local: Public Health and Primary Care” held on May 23rd from 18.00 to 19.30, Room IX at UN Palace. Moreover, the debate
“Comment développer un monde plus sain?” with the general public and different experts will take place on June 7th at University of Geneva, Uni Dufour Room U300 from 18:30 to 20:30.

The “A Global Charter of Public’s Health” is available at: http://wfpha.org

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