

THE WORLD MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

WMA STATEMENT ON THE PROTECTION AND INTEGRITY OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN ARMED CONFLICTS AND OTHER SITUATIONS OF VIOLENCE

Adopted by the WMA General Assembly, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2011

PREAMBLE

1 During wars and armed conflicts hospitals and other medical facilities have often been attacked and misused and patients and medical personnel have been killed or wounded¹. Such attacks are a violation of the Geneva Conventions (1949), Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977) and WMA regulations in times of war (2006).

2 The World Medical Association (WMA) has been active in condemning documented attacks on medical personnel and facilities in armed conflicts. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols shall protect medical personnel in international and non-international armed conflicts. The warring parties have duty not to interfere with medical care for wounded or sick combatants and civilians, and not attack, threaten or impede medical functions. Physicians and other health care personnel must be considered as neutral and must not be prevented from fulfilling their duties.

3 The lack of systematic reporting and documentation of violence against medical personnel and facilities creates threats to both civilians and military personnel. The development of strategies for protection and efforts to improve compliance with the laws of war are impeded as long as such information is not available.

STATEMENT

4 The World Medical Association condemns all attacks on and misuse of medical personnel, facilities and vehicles in armed conflicts. These attacks put people in need of help in great danger and can lead to the flight of physicians and other health personnel from the conflict areas with a lack of available medical personnel as a result.

5 Currently no party is responsible for collecting data regarding assaults on medical personnel and facilities. Data collection after attacks is vital to identify the reasons why medical personnel and facilities are attacked. Such data are important in order to understand the nature of the attacks and to take necessary steps to prevent attacks in the future. All attacks must also be properly investigated and those responsible for the violations of the Geneva Conventions and Protocols must be brought to justice.

6 The WMA requests that appropriate international bodies establish mechanisms with the necessary resources to collect and disseminate data regarding assaults on physicians, other health care personnel and medical facilities in armed conflicts. Such mechanisms could include the establishment of a new United Nations post of Rapporteur on the independence and integrity of health professionals. As stated in the WMA proposal for a United Nations Rapporteur on the

Independence and Integrity of Health Professionals (1997), “The new rapporteur would be charged with the task of monitoring that doctors are allowed to move freely and that patients have access to medical treatment, without discrimination as to nationality or ethnic origin, in war zones or in situations of political tension”.

7 When a reporting system is established the WMA will recommend to their member organisations reporting armed conflicts, which they become aware of.

