

Statement on COVID-19 Response

148th session of the WHO Executive Board (Agenda Item 14.1)

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Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) representing 550,000 family doctors in 150 countries working at the frontline of primary health care (PHC).

Family doctors and their teams are the first contacts of patients in the fight against outbreaks and in the management of people's emergent, acute and chronic conditions, mental health, and health promotion measures with attention to the whole family and the community.

Family doctors and their PHC teams are central to health emergency risk management, preparedness, and communication locally & nationally. We urge member states to involve Family doctors in each community's planning of the pandemic response, and in the design of primary health care strategies to approach the present and future crisis and pandemics.

Family doctors have vital roles as trusted members of the community and in the frontline of health systems. Their roles include, risk assessment, emergency care, disaster prevention, preparedness with vaccination and risk communication, and response. And on the follow up, during recovery and rehabilitation, reducing the exacerbation of chronic illnesses.

To achieve a high-quality emergency response, PHC needs to be appropriately funded with an investment in human resources for health, with training, and improved working conditions, including provision of Personal Protective Equipment for all members of the PHC team. The PHC workforce should be in numbers sufficient to meet each country's needs and with educational and skill training to provide the complexity of care required in emergencies often managed by PHC teams.

WONCA is committed to the emergency response, in collaboration with WHO, WHO regions through WONCA regional organizations, and with member states through national associations of family doctors. Global and member state collaboration with experts in Family Medicine will enhance the preparedness of PHC during the pandemic and future emergencies.