

'Health Through Peace' Statement

November 2015

HEALTH
THROUGH
PEACE

As members of the health community, some of whom gathered at the Health Through Peace conference in November 2015 in London, we note that *"the preservation and promotion of peace is the most significant factor for the attainment of health for all"*.¹

We also note:

- Evidence of an increase in war, conflict and violence globally, driven substantially by events in the Middle East and North Africa;²
- An increase in the volume of international transfers of major weapons;³
- The spread of terrorism and indiscriminate attacks on civilians;
- Direct attacks in conflict zones on hospitals, clinics, ambulances and healthcare staff, breaking the international law that protects them;
- The biggest number of refugees in the world since WWII;⁴
- Growing social inequalities, ecological degradation and rising greenhouse gas emissions which will further undermine peace and human security;
- The continued development and deployment of nuclear weapons in the UK and elsewhere (- of 15,000 existing nuclear weapons, 1,800 are on alert and ready for use); and
- An over-emphasis on military power and the threat of violence as a source of security having been not just ineffective but also counter-productive.

We believe that a more peaceful future is not only possible, but necessary for good health.

As a community, we provide humanitarian relief, treatment, care and protection for the victims and casualties of war. But we also have a duty and mandate to prevent war and violence, and actively promote peace. And so we call upon all health professionals to actively work towards:

¹ World Health Organisation, 1981. Health as Bridge to Peace. World Health Assembly Resolution 34.38, 1981, as cited in Health as a Potential Contribution to Peace: "Realities from the field: What has WHO learned in the 1990s." Available at:

² According to Institute for Economics and Peace, the world as a whole has become less peaceful over the last eight years. There were more wars conducted in 2014 than in any other year since 2000.

³ According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates, the volume of international transfers of major weapons grew between 2005–09 and 2010–14, driven primarily by suppliers from the United States, Russia, China, Germany and France.

⁴ According to UNHCR, 59 million people (1 in every 122 people in the world) are presently refugees or internally displaced because of conflict and violence.

- Wider recognition of our common humanity, inter-dependence and reliance upon a fragile and finite planet;
- National security policies that better address the underlying causes of war, conflict and violence (including historical and current social, ecological and economic injustices) and which places greater emphasis on moral leadership, ethical foreign policy and universal human rights;
- Greater democratic control over individuals, companies and groups with a vested interest in the propagation of war, arms sales and militarisation;
- Total adherence to international humanitarian law by all actors, state and non-state; and
- Eradication of corruption and secrecy from all aspects and forms of the arms trade.