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International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care Inc.

Meeting:

Seventy-third World Health Assembly

Agenda Item:

- Written statements exceptionally considered under provisional agenda item 3 Address by WHO Director-General devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic response in advance of the opening of the Health Assembly

Statement:

We thank the Secretariat for preparing and incorporating a palliative care component into the WHO Guidelines for Clinical Management of COVID-19 and support the Resolution on COVID-19 response, which includes palliative care. We encourage Member States to work with WHO Medicines Division, UNODC, and INCB to provide appropriate training and improve access to essential palliative care medicines on the WHO Model List. We draw Member States' attention to the practical suggestions in the 2018 WHO Guide Integrating Palliative Care and Symptom Relief into the Response to Humanitarian Emergencies and Crises.

COVID-19 has exposed the need for all health systems to

- Integrate basic palliative care into humanitarian responses in consultation with providers and patients;
- Train, equip, and support health care workers to deliver basic palliative care in all settings, including refugee camps, nursing homes, prisons, at home, and in hospitals;
- Strengthen pharmaceutical supply chains to ensure adequate access to the palliative care medications on the WHO Model List, including immediate release morphine, crucial for managing Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS) and the pain and breathlessness of patients with palliative care needs pre-COVID;

In 2014, the 67th WHA approved Resolution 67/19 on palliative care, now recognized an essential service within Primary Health Care (Declaration of Astana 2018) and Universal Health Coverage (UN Political Declaration 2019).

According to the WHO, an estimated 40 million people annually need palliative care, 78% of them in low- and middle-income countries. Worldwide, only about 14% of people who need palliative care currently receive it. COVID-19 is multiplying those numbers exponentially.

Please go to our global palliative care website iahpc.com for key clinical, ethical, and health system recommendations for palliative care development. IAHP's international experts are standing by to help WHO Member States build sustainable health systems

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