



**World Federation of Public Health Associations**  
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique  
Federación Mundial de Asociaciones de Salud Pública

## The Istanbul Declaration HEALTH: THE FIRST HUMAN RIGHT

*We, the 2,380 participants from 142 countries assembled at the 12th World Congress on Public Health in Istanbul from 27 April to 1 May 2009, declare and affirm as follows:*

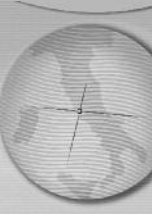
Now is the time to make a new commitment to the health of populations. The need for improvement and maintenance of public health must now be recognized, advocated and achieved by all policy-makers and decision-takers. Protection of public health is a primary responsibility of governments at all levels, especially including heads of state and prime ministers. This implies renewed political will. It also implies a new understanding of public health as the first public good, needing adequate and therefore, increased human, financial, and other material resources.

The years 2008 and 2009 so far have been times of unprecedented and momentous social, economic, and political events. These have included linked food, fuel and financial crises. All this has occurred in the context of human-made global climate change, depletion of non-renewable sources of energy and of water, actual and potential extinction of innumerable habitats and species, and deterioration of soil, water and air quality.

These phenomena demonstrate massive structural failures in policies and systems. Social determinants are causing increased disease and ill-health. Unemployment and poverty are increasing. Nearly one billion people are hungry, living in fear of starvation. Food security is threatened as never before in recent decades, most of all in Africa and Asia. Senseless wars and conflicts are causing death, disaster and misery in many parts of the world. In the week of the Congress, an outbreak of a deadly infectious disease threatened to become pandemic. The global economic recession that began in 2008 is liable to jeopardize progress towards fulfillment of Millennium Development Goals agreed by member states of the United Nations in 2000.

This is a time of intense disturbance. We are now living in a new world, of unique challenge and also unique opportunity for those committed to public health and for everybody. The challenges we now face are as great as those that faced public health pioneers of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Committed and sustained leadership is needed, including from young people. Now is the time for all those who affect the lives of others, working in government, industry, and in civil society, and as health care workers, academics, community and faith-based leaders, and citizens, to affirm the fundamental and elemental importance of public goods, including public health, and to assert and practice the basic human values of solidarity, sustainability, morality, justice, equity, fairness and tolerance.



*As representatives of our organizations, as health professionals and as citizens, we affirm and declare the following principles and goals. We pledge to work to achieve them.*

Good health and well-being are necessary conditions for personal, family, community, national and global social, economic, and cultural development.

Human health and well-being depend on, and are inseparable from, the health, welfare and maintenance of the living world and the biosphere.

The determinants of personal and population health are social, economic, political and environmental, as well as behavioral and biological.

Elemental needs for the world of which humans are a part, are for light and heat, and for clean air and water, fertile earth, and adequate nourishing food.

Fundamental human needs include safe shelter, nurturing parents, supportive communities, primary schooling, rewarding work, and peaceful societies.

The protection of public goods, including public health, is the prime duty and responsibility of all those responsible for governance at all level.

Equitable access to comprehensive, effective health care systems, including primary health care and public health services, is a human right.

Adequate public health systems promote health and well-being, as well as prevent disease, disabilities and their risks, throughout the lifespan.

Reduction of inequities and disparities in national and personal economic and other material resources is a prerequisite of improved public health.

Vulnerable and marginalized people are at greater risk of illness because of impoverishment of basic rights and entitlements and economic resources.

The rights and the healthy traditions and cultures of Indigenous people and communities, need to be recognized, respected, promoted and protected.

Equal rights for all, and implementation of all components of the rule of law, are essential to encourage, protect and improve public health.

Population health also depends on the safe and timely elimination of all weapons of mass destruction – nuclear, chemical, and biological.

As education needs are met, the well-being of populations will improve, and the rates, severity and duration of diseases will decrease.

The globalization of migration, transport, trade and communications signals that public health cannot be addressed in isolation or only at national level.

Improvement and maintenance of public health requires increased strong commitment and capacity for training, research and education, and action.