



IAPO Intervention: Agenda Item 5a – European Action Plan for Strengthening Public Health Capacities and Services

**World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe
62nd session of the Regional Committee for Europe**

Thank you Chairman,

Honourable members of the Committee, distinguished delegates.

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today on this important topic for the health and prosperity of patients in Europe. The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations, or IAPO, is an alliance of patient groups that represent the interests of patients worldwide. We have over 200 members which span over 60 countries and 50 disease areas, representing an estimated 365 million patients.

Health systems in all world regions are under pressure and cannot cope if they continue to focus on the disease and not the patient. As is increasingly recognized, a sustainable approach to health system design and delivery needs to be based on patient-centred healthcare which encompasses the five principles, as outlined in IAPO's Declaration on Patient-Centred Healthcare, of: respect for an individual's unique needs, preferences and values as well as their autonomy and independence; choice and empowerment; patient involvement in health policy; access and support to receive safe, quality and appropriate healthcare services and information. It is imperative that these principles are at the core of your work.

In your work to strengthen healthcare systems, whether that is putting patients at the centre of service delivery or securing universal access, patients and patients' organizations are your key ally. Patients and patients' organizations across all disease areas are delivering services from patient education to providing care and support, across the world, with much of this work going unrecognized in daily policy-making. Often, these patients' organizations are best placed to understand the realities facing patients on a day to day basis and are an essential resource for all people with a stake in delivering quality and safe healthcare.

Patients are always a relevant stakeholder in health matters and therefore member states should establish robust frameworks to involve patients in all policy development.

Likewise, we believe that WHO has a crucial leadership role to play in both exemplifying patient involvement in its own practice and supporting governments to establish models of patient involvement to strengthen national health dialogue. IAPO is committed to working with WHO and member states to facilitate this work for the benefit of all.

Thank you for your attention.