

The Kingdom of The Netherlands, committee A, 13.7 Health and Care workforce

Full text

Final statement Youth Delegate The Netherlands at 78th World Health Assembly (full text)

Thank you Chair,

My name is Manar Daoud, and I speak to you today as a youth delegate and final-year medical student, preparing to enter the health workforce with both hope and hesitation.

Across the world, healthcare systems are under pressure: from pandemics, climate crises, conflicts, unsafe environments, and chronic underinvestment. But pressure on systems is really pressure on people. And no health system can function without protecting the very people who sustain it.

As I prepare to begin my career, I find myself asking: *will I be safe? Supported? Or will I burn out like so many before me?* In Europe, one in three healthcare workers feels daily exhaustion, one in four experience emotional burn out, and one in five verbal abuse and physical threats. Fewer than half believe they can stay in their jobs until retirement. Since 2023, over 2,500 attacks on health care have been recorded – arrests, kidnappings, destruction and killing – with more than 1,000 health care workers killed in Gaza alone.

This cannot be the norm. Yet, despite this, I want to be part of the solution. Like many young people, I chose medicine because I want to help people. But we cannot do so in unsafe, unsupported and unequal health systems.

I worry not only for my future, but for my future patients. They will face mental health struggles, misinformation, deepening social inequalities, and the inevitable effects of climate change. Without enough trained, protected health professionals, entire communities will be left behind. And by 2030, we are looking at a global shortage of 11 million healthcare workers.

But this future is not inevitable! Imagine if humanitarian protections were enforced so that hospitals, ambulances, patients and health care workers are never targets? Imagine work environments where mental health support is the norm, not an afterthought? Young people bring creativity, urgency and solidarity. Involve us meaningfully! Tackle the root causes of workforce burnout: unsafe environments, unfair working conditions, and unequal opportunities.

Invest in people, not just in policies. Because when you protect health care workers, you protect the future of health care. When you support us, you don't just prevent harm, you unlock potential; and

you give young people, in this generation and the next, the chance not just to survive in this profession, but to thrive and inspire, so we can serve out communities with energy, compassion and skill.

Thank you.