



**Statement to the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly, 24 May to 1 June 2021**  
**on agenda item 13.1: Global Action on Patient Safety**

*Action is urgently needed to avoid health-care related harm and we welcome WHO's efforts to address this issue. However, in its current form, the proposed Global Patient Safety Action Plan falls short of addressing the root causes of this problem.*

*We are concerned about the artificial cleaving of the issue of patient safety from the broader concern of quality of healthcare. WHO has previously defined quality health services as those that are effective, safe, people-centred, timely, equitable, integrated and efficient. Decoupling patient safety from these features of quality care risks institutionalizing a narrow approach rather than a holistic vision of health system strengthening.*

*Threats to patient safety and to quality of care are not merely technical, micro-level challenges in health care delivery settings. Patient harm is in large part the downstream product of upstream political and economic circumstances, especially the commodification of health and chronic underfunding of health systems. Technical interventions like staff training and digital checklists cannot be expected to dramatically improve quality of care in the absence of structural changes.*

*We urge WHO to include and address the following issues:*

- *Inadequate access to medicines because of exorbitant prices and failure to invest in research;*
- *Unrealistic and inhumane workloads arising from inadequate or non-existent regulation of health care working conditions;*
- *Rampant, unregulated pharmaceutical marketing, leading to medication overuse and misuse;*
- *Unregulated and unaccountable private medical practice;*
- *Distributional inefficiencies, including the clustering of private providers in wealthy and/or urban areas;*
- *Poor coordination of services, facilities and resources, leading to chaotic care journeys for patients.*

*We urge countries to demand a more comprehensive strategy that directly addresses issues of political economy, structural inequity and corporate power before endorsing the Global Action Plan.*