

## **Athens Declaration on the Mental Health Consequences of Crises and Disasters**

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On the occasion of the International Congress of the World Federation for Mental Health and the Hellenic Psychiatric Association "Crises and Disasters – Psychosocial Consequences" (March 2013) the World Federation for Mental Health jointly with the Hellenic Psychiatric Association, the Society of Preventive Psychiatry, the World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation, the Psychiatric Association for Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the Section of Preventive Psychiatry of the World Psychiatric Association, the International College of Person-centered Medicine and the Institute of Spanish Speaking Psychiatrists make the following declaration on the mental health consequences of crises and disasters.

Promoting and protecting the mental health and the well being of the population must be a high priority for governments. Paying attention to the mental and emotional health of a nation's people must be given added priority during crises and disasters such as the world is currently experiencing. Worth noting in this context is that mental health funding is cost effective.

The Global Mental Health Plan and the World Federation for Mental Health "People's Charter for Mental Health" have strongly endorsed the need for a comprehensive response to these disasters involving Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations, including professional associations and Civil society, including patients-users' and families-carers' groups.

The WFMH, HPA, SPP, WAPR, PAEEB, SPP-WPA, ICPCM and IPLE Call:

- On all nations involved in crises and disasters to respond specifically to these issues and to consider the serious immediate and long - term mental health consequences
- On the international mental health community, including professional associations and NGOs concerned with health, to intervene and support people affected by these crises and disasters
- On all concerned to intervene with respective governments to insist on upholding the Geneva conventions concerned with the health consequences of war and to provide immediate financial support to the mental health services located in conflict areas
- On those major humanitarian organizations that traditionally have not prioritised mental health, to provide the means to support established organizations working in the field of Mental Health to expand training and services according to the new Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings
- On all Governments and communities affected by the current economic crisis to provide support and aid to the population in order to combat the psychosocial consequences of crises and disasters
- On all concerned to endorse the Recommendations of the WFMH-MGMH "Peoples' Charter for Mental Health"
- On the United Nations General Assembly to convene a Special Session on Mental Health with the appointment of a UN Special Envoy
  - For the acceptance of mental disorders as the fifth major non-communicable disease
  - That mental health and well-being both be recognised as essential components of the Sustainable Development Goals
  - That mental health be represented on all disaster emergency committees and of course
  - For the WHO Comprehensive Action Plan to be implemented expeditiously by all countries.

*Given in Athens on 9th March 2013*