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Geneva, 21st January 2021

Your Excellency Minister of Health

During its General Assembly which took place in October 2020 the World Psychiatric Association, representing more than 250.000 psychiatrists in 120 countries adopted a position statement on health care for people with mental illness during the current COVID pandemic. I am taking the liberty of attaching the text of the relevant WPA Position Statement for easy reference.

The WPA Position Statement has been drafted after investigations in several countries showed that people with mental illness are more likely to be infected by COVID and that, once affected they have much higher mortality rates than the rest of the population.

The WPA's Advisory Committee on Response to Emergencies (ACRE) discussed these facts at their meeting earlier this week and recommended that the World Psychiatric Association should approach governments, as well as to governmental and nongovernmental institutions, to urge them to include people with mental illness among the groups which have been given priority in vaccination programs.

I hope that your government will be willing to do so. The inclusion of persons with Severe Mental Illnesses (SMIs) among the groups considered to deserve priority in vaccination programs is fully justified on the basis of clinical and public health while at the same time expressing respect for the human rights of people with mental illness.

The World Psychiatric Association will continue monitoring the situation in countries and inform professional and governmental bodies about the impact of COVID on people with mental illness and their families as about the effects of the vaccination against COVID. We shall be pleased to continue providing you with additional information produced in our investigations.

With respect and all best wishes for a serene and healthy New Year

Dr Afzal Javed



President
World Psychiatric Association