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MESSAGE ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

10 October 2008

Mental disorders occur in all cultures and at all stages of life. They are risk factors for, or consequences of, many other health problems, and are too often associated with poverty, marginalization and social disadvantage. They also appear more frequently in the midst of conflict and disasters.

Health systems around the world face enormous challenges in delivering mental health care and protecting the human rights of people with severe disorders. The resources available are insufficient, inequitably distributed and inefficiently used. As a result, a large majority of people with mental disorders receive no care at all.

Scaling-up services should be a priority. The World Health Organization's Mental Health Gap Action Programme, launched this month, identifies the strategies needed for scaling up mental health care using cost-effective interventions in resource-constrained settings. The programme calls on all partners -- governments, multilateral agencies, donors, public health organizations, mental health professionals and consumer groups -- to join together for advocacy and action to make this happen.

More broadly, we must do more to integrate mental health awareness into all aspects of health and social policy, health-system planning, and primary and secondary general health care. Mental health is of paramount important for personal well-being, family relationships and an individual's ability to contribute to society. On this World Mental Health Day, let us recognize that there can be no health without mental health.