

WHO World Health Assembly 73 (WHA73)

Address by Dr Tedros, Director-General on the Covid-19 Pandemic (A73/3)

FDI World Dental Federation (FDI), representing 200 national dental associations and over one million dentists, welcomes the resolution on the COVID-19 response.

To support member states in mitigating the impact of the pandemic and help in planning and preparing for the recovery phase, as well as strengthen preparedness for health emergencies, we recommend:

1. **Civil society organizations such as FDI are part of the solution and our expertise and knowledge is leveraged:** we are carrying out a global survey to understand the current guidance, initiatives and resources related to dentistry and oral health during the COVID-19 outbreak. The data collected aims to assist national-level responses to the crisis, inform best practices related to infection prevention and control, the redeployment of staff and reconfiguration of dental practices.
2. **WHO provides technical guidance for dental practice:** as dental procedures may generate a large number of droplets and aerosols, the standard protective measures in daily clinical work are not effective enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Coordinated action to ensure the security of the supply chain of adequate, appropriate and affordable personal protective equipment, is therefore, urgently needed. Scientific investigation is also needed to understand the real risk of aerosols in the dental setting, as well as the role of diagnosis and immunological tests for a safer dental practice environment.
3. **Continued access to care is secured and health promotion and prevention measures are strengthened:** prevention, early detection and treatment are key to avoiding an even bigger burden on health systems in the future. We must therefore ensure that vulnerable populations get the care they need, without further delay, to avoid unnecessary pain, suffering or even early death. This includes people: currently not covered by healthcare systems, namely refugees and displaced persons; living with disabilities or having other specific needs; considered high risk, including the elderly and those living with NCDs. At the same time, we must use the opportunity to highlight prevention strategies that can avoid people needing treatment at all, avoiding a burden on health systems.