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**STATEMENT BY DR MARGARET D. MAXWELL,
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Medical Womens International Association (MWIA) is a nongovernmental organization in official relations with WHO since 1954. It is a worldwide association of women doctors which was established in 1919. My duties as Western Pacific Regional Vice-President of MWIA have involved meetings with women doctors of Korea, Japan, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand. The following is a brief summary of an amalgamation of the concerns and problems met by women doctors in these countries.

MWIA stresses the importance of provision for optimal health throughout life from conception to old age. It believes that high quality health must be available, accessible, affordable and appropriate for all and encourages strategies whereby its members can endeavour to achieve this through their professional work.

Through recent international meetings held under the umbrella of WHO in other regions of the world, MWIA has spoken out on several priority issues -Maternal and infant morbidity and mortality, the need for improved reproductive health, adolescent health, mental health and better care for the elderly. It recognises the potential disastrous effects of domestic violence and of the various forms of substance abuse.

All of these problems threaten the physical and mental state of women and thus have repercussions on the well-being of families and whole communities. With more than half of the

population under the age of 25 and the recognised gender inequalities in access to basic health services MWIA sees it as essential to rectify some of these imbalances as soon as possible. .

WHO and other UN agencies also address these issues. WHO is a high profile organization with better access to funding, ability to coordinate training programmes and to mobilize partners to progress towards improving health services.

Being an organization of qualified women doctors MWIA would hope to bring our knowledge and expertise into this setting.

In looking back on the achievements of the last millennium it is proper to acknowledge the tremendous contribution to world health by the WHO's efforts in promoting the importance of a standard international classification of diseases together with its widespread dissemination of health education material.

At the beginning of this new millennium three projects are seen as spearhead challenges for MWIA -

1. Increased emphasis on the need to recognise cultural differences in the practice of family medicine. The challenges of cultural diversity have been accepted by WHO and implemented through cross-cultural discussions and strategies.

Even in New Zealand, in the southern reaches of this Western Pacific Region, we have recently seen a new development- our schools have pupils from an increasing number of various nationalities. An enquiry at three major schools in the Auckland area showed that currently each contained pupils from 48- 52 different nationalities. This demonstrates a new perspective within the social structure of our country. It has implications in educational as well as health provision.

In April 2001 the triennial International Congress of MWIA will be held in Sydney, Australia and we will address and study aspects of health in a multicultural world.

2. HIV/ AIDS has decimated populations in many lands. We need to pool all our initiatives to achieve research progress, urgent therapeutic procedures that are cost effective, but we must never forget to face the humanitarian devastation by HIV/AIDS epidemics sweeping through populations. The social implications of HIV/AIDS require concerted efforts of all health providers NOW.

3. Promotion of the acceptance of women doctors in decision-making roles. MWIA sees that greater use of modern information technologies can bring the partnerships with NGOs, governments and international agencies within reach of the medical workforce in all countries.

MWIA wants to be part of this challenging medical programme into the 21st Century.