



World Federation for Mental Health Presidential New Year Message 2016

I would like to wish a Happy New Year to all WFMH members, member associations, friends, volunteers, WFMH Directors and staff, particularly Ellen Mercer, Debbie Maguire, Elena Berger, Myrna Lachenal, Nancy Wallace, Hugh Schulze, Claire Brooks, and every person who has had contact with or is associated with mental health. It is your dedication and selfless service that has helped many people and families with mental health issues to continue to manage their wellbeing – I want to personally thank you for this.

Since I became the 42nd President of the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) in October 2015 I have received many personal communications from institutions and individuals about mental health issues globally. Many of these messages have been encouraging, but there are still many people who continue to face challenges, irrespective of whether they live in a high, medium or low income country. This is a reminder that there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve mental health parity and address mental health stigma. I am using this New Year message to call on each of you to join us to truly make a difference.

The mental health community achieved a lot at the United Nations and World Health Organization in 2015 because of the hard work and dedication of people like you, the institutions that you belong to and represent, and the collaborations that have been forged. We must now re-double our efforts to make 2016 an even better year for mental health.

The World Federation for Mental Health was set up in 1948 to advance mental health issues globally and to raise public awareness of mental health. World Mental Health Day has been held on 10th October annually since 1992.

Raising awareness of mental health issues is not just something we do for one day – it should be an everyday activity. So I have written a personal letter to the Ambassadors worldwide and to their missions based in Geneva asking for their help to identify the people in their countries to assist us in this task. All the responses I have received so far have been positive and WFMH will continue to

build upon this alliance because we need our governments to become true partners in tackling the issue of stigma, discrimination and poor access to mental health.

Over the last year we have worked with the 'The World Dignity Project,' to raise mental health awareness by developing an easily recognisable Dignity symbol to improve mental health visibility. My mission is to drive public awareness about the need for Dignity in mental health, using the Dignity symbol to represent this concept. We aim to attract one million citizens of the world as founding members of this initiative so I seize this opportunity to ask you to visit the website (www.worlddignityproject.com), download the symbol, share it and include it wherever you can, for example in letterheads and publicity material taking, every opportunity to show solidarity with mental health.

We know that one in four adults will experience mental health difficulties in their lifetime, yet stigma and discrimination are significant barriers that deprive people of their dignity in mental health. None of us is immune from experiencing distress. Better equipping the general population to respond more appropriately to other people's distress in order to promote better mental health and wellbeing. With this in mind, I am very pleased to announce that the theme of 2016 World Mental Health Day will focus on something that binds us all together, Psychological and Mental Health First Aid. Please go to the WFMH website and keep abreast of the developing 2016 World Mental Health Day campaign so that you can also play your part.

Once more wishing you all a fruitful 2016.

Best wishes



Gabriel Ivbijaro MBE JP
President WFMH
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www.worlddignityproject.com