



**WMA contribution to the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls to the UN General Assembly on violence against women and girls in sport**

1. The [World Medical Association](http://www.wma.net) (WMA) is the global federation of National Medical

professional activity. This **forced choice** contravenes the right to work within the meaning of article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which guarantees



16. The “safe and healthy working conditions” a fundamental aspect of the right to just and favourable conditions of work, is closely related to other Covenant rights, in particular the right to the highest attainable level of physical and mental health<sup>13</sup>. As explained above, the medical intervention imposed by the World Athletic Regulations constitutes a definite risk to the health of the female athlete, depriving her from safe and healthy working conditions.

### **Infringement to the patient-physician relationship**

17. The very nature of the physicians’ obligations under the World Athletic Regulations is corrupted from the outset, confronting them with an **ethical dilemma**: either they comply with the regulations and provide medical care to athletes for the purposes of athletic performance, at the risk of compromising the patient’s health and well-being; or they oppose the regulations in accordance with the ethical values of their profession and find themselves in conflict with their athletics federation and at risk of losing their position.

18. By asking physicians to act deliberately in breach of their ethical duties to athletes, the Regulations hamper the trustworthy patient-physician relationship. The WMA sees in the patient-physician relationship “the fundamental core of any medical action centred on a person” which must be protected at any time “from interference from governments, other agents and institutional administrations in the practice of medicine”<sup>14</sup>.

19. This protection is essential because it is intrinsically linked to the patients’ rights, autonomy and dignity. Likewise, “in order to carry out his or her ethical obligations, the sports medicine physician’s authority must be fully recognized and upheld, particularly when it concerns the health and safety of the athlete. Concern for the athlete’s health and safety must override the interests of any third party”<sup>15</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

20. The World Athletic Regulations institute a **coercive system** in which certain female athletes are confined because of their natural physiological variations, resulting in a succession of harsh violations of their fundamental rights relating to health, non-discrimination and work, as well as the principles of medical ethics. Taken as a whole, we consider this system to be a form of blatant violence against women, within the meaning of the [United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) (1993) and the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#) (1979).