New Delhi, October 21, 2016: A strong warning about continued political attempts around the world to marginalise the autonomy and self-governance of the medical profession has been given by the new President of the World Medical Association.

Dr. Ketan Desai, a former President of the Indian Medical Association, was delivering his inaugural speech as President of the WMA at the Association’s annual Assembly in Taiwan.

He told delegates from more than 40 national medical associations: ‘In many countries like Turkey, India, and the United Kingdom, there are continued political attempts to undo or marginalize autonomy and self-governance of the medical profession, including mauling and trampling on the trinity of professional autonomy, clinical independence and self-governance.’

‘Yet professional autonomy is not limited to asking for the privilege to do what we want to do. It is less about physicians and more about patients’ rights. It is the assurance that individual physicians have the freedom to exercise their professional judgment in the care and treatment of their patients without undue influence of any type from any quarter how so powerful and mighty they be’.

‘Regulation of clinical practice, framing evidence-based standard treatment guidelines, defining and checking professional malpractice and medical education all need vital professional independence and a democratic system based on meaningful participative decision making. The WMA has been, is and must continue to be against government attempts to usurp professional independence through bureaucrats and politicians and making the same ‘subservient’, as a part of their calculated nefarious designs.’

He said that in a democratic society, self-governance is an element of horizontal power-sharing and an important pillar of civil society and democracy itself. ‘Doing away with the vital concept
of self-governance will not only amount to subverting a valuable element of democracy but end up in devouring the very soul of it.’

Dr. Desai, a urologist and a former President of the Medical Council of India, will serve as President of the WMA for 2016/17.

He emphatically brought out that cross border terrorism anywhere and everywhere needs to be stopped at all costs. Be it the 9/11 terrorist attack in the USA ( twin tower), Mumbai terror attack, traumatized Brussels, victimized Paris, school children massacred in Pakistan, bruised Uri or any other attack Globally disrupts the tranquility and harmony of the society in an irreparable manner. Terrorism by any name and for any reason is terrorism and terrorism alone. There is nothing like “good” or “bad” terrorism. It is a slur on civilization of mankind and hence needs to be dealt with an iron hand and commensurate political will by all the countries in the world.

In his speech, Dr. Desai also called for physicians to receive more protection, whether in war or civil conflict situations. He said physicians were under constant threat throughout the world.

‘They are risking their lives while treating their patients in a committed manner. While on one hand in some parts of the world hospitals are being bombarded, ambulances hijacked, nurses and doctors kidnapped or killed and physicians pressured, threatened and tortured, on the other hand in other parts of the world, especially Asian Countries, doctors are being assaulted and medical establishments attacked and damaged’.

‘The Geneva Convention is practiced more in breach than observance, invariably ending up in flagrant violation of the inviolate human rights’.

‘It is a core commitment of physicians as a part of their basic duty to help patients by their professional knowledge without any distinction or discrimination of any type and magnitude. To a physician, a patient is neither a friend nor an enemy. They legitimately need protection from violence while at work, whether in war or civil conflict situations’.

In a wide-ranging speech, Dr. Desai also warned that professional honesty and integrity were at risk in many countries because physicians were prescribing and referring patients based on pecuniary self-interest or ‘kick backs’. He said the profession should be practices transparently. Physicians should not receive any financial or other consideration for referring patients to laboratories, pharmacies or opticians.

He has emphasised in his speech that perhaps the time has come to seriously think about the need to create a “World Health Keeping Force” on the lines of “World Peace Keeping Force”. By virtue of the fact that National Medical Associations that have substantial membership of Health professionals with them together can jointly go in for creation of such an ‘international health keeping force’ under the aegis of the WMA.
He ended his speech by extolling the virtues of yoga. With the expense of medical care rising and the need for preventive medicine, yoga was a proven way to prevent illness and preserve health. It was totally non-invasive, gentle and soothing and was cost effective. In diligent recognition of the same since last year the United Nations had adopted 21st June as the International Yoga Day.

“IMA National leaders and its 2.7 lakh members congratulate Dr Desai on taking over as the President of the World Medical Association. This is an extremely prestigious post and will allow key issues affecting the Indian healthcare system to be addressed at a global platform”, said Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal – President Elect Indian Medical Association.

All Website Link - [http://www.ima-india.org/drdesai/](http://www.ima-india.org/drdesai/)
Video - [http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/Video.html](http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/Video.html)
Audio - [http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/Audio.html](http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/Audio.html)
Photos - [http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/photo/default.htm](http://module.ima-india.org/15102016d/photo/default.htm)

About World Medical Association

The World Medical Association (WMA) is an international organization representing physicians. It was founded on 17 September 1947, when physicians from 27 different countries met at the First General Assembly of the WMA in Paris. The organization was created to ensure the independence of physicians, and to work for the highest possible standards of ethical behaviour and care by physicians, at all times. This was particularly important to physicians after the Second World War, and therefore the WMA has always been an independent confederation of free professional associations. Funding has been by the annual contributions of its members, which has now grown to 111 National Medical Associations.