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WORLD PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE ON BEST PRACTICE IN WORKING WITH SERVICE USERS AND CARERS

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The WPA has invited service users and family carers to join in its work as members of a taskforce, recognising their essential contribution to improving mental health in any country. WPA President Prof. Mario Maj established the project within the WPA Action Plan 2008 to 2011. The taskforce has prepared recommendations for the international mental health community on best practices in working with service users and carers. It has also worked with the WPA Standing Committee on Ethics to prepare a new paragraph for the WPA Declaration of Madrid. The WHO Department of Mental Health has offered its experience and advice.

Ten recommendations are ready for dissemination after extensive consultation. Each country will need specific guidelines to apply these recommendations. The recommendations begin by declaration that respecting human rights is the basis of successful partnerships for mental health. The second recommendation is that legislation, policy and clinical practice relevant to the lives and care of people with mental disorders need to be developed in collaboration with users and carers. The series continues with a recommendation that the best clinical care of any person in acute or rehabilitation situations is done in collaboration between the user, the carers and the clinicians. Education, research and quality improvement in mental health care also require this collaboration. The next step is developing a series of projects to apply these broad principles in each country and local communities. The WPA hopes to support partnership and participatory developments worldwide, and learn from these experiences.