Mr. President,

On behalf of Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa, and Thailand, it is an honor for Norway to introduce this year’s “Global Health and Foreign Policy”-resolution.

Our seven countries have been collaborating on global health and foreign policy since 2007. Every year since then, the group has introduced a resolution to the General Assembly, each time focusing on a different topic.

The topic of this year’s resolution is ensuring the safety of medical and health personnel, including in conflict situations, as well as other situations of emergency, such as in the current Ebola outbreak.

(Check against delivery)
Mr. President,

Sadly, this topic has become very relevant in the last couple of months. In the current Ebola outbreak in West Africa, health workers are disproportionately affected. Over 350 have been confirmed dead, many more have been otherwise affected, and this is largely due to lack of proper and adequate safety equipment. And with the continuing spread of the Ebola virus disease, the health workers will continue to be at risk. There have even been some instances in which health care workers have been attacked by the local population.

Furthermore, in situations of conflict, there have been also been numerous – and increasing - instances of attacks on health care workers, medical transports, hospitals and other healthcare facilities.

Mr. President,

This resolution strongly condemns all attacks on medical and health care personnel. We recognize - and deplore - the long-term consequences of such attacks on both the population and health care systems of the countries concerned.

The resolution furthermore makes a strong linkage between the safety of health workers and development. The resolution recognizes that attacks upon medical and health personnel weaken the ability of health systems to deliver essential and life-saving care, ultimately jeopardizing the realization of the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as well as creating barriers to universal access to health services.

The resolution therefore calls for all member states and all stakeholders to respect the integrity of medical and health personnel in carrying out their duties.
The resolution also urges member states, relevant international organizations and non-state actors to develop effective preventive measures to enhance and promote the safety and protection of medical and health personnel, including promoting respect for their code of ethics.

Furthermore, the resolution calls for clear and universally recognized definitions and norms for the identification and marking of medical and health personnel, their transports and installations, and emphasizes the need to develop appropriate measures to:

a) Educate medical and health personnel, state employees and the general population;

b) Promote protection of medical and health personnel, their transports and installations;

c) Address violence against medical and health personnel, including through national legal frameworks

We also call on both member states and the World Health Organization to develop methods for systematic collection of data on attacks on health workers, health facilities and vehicles.

Mr. President,

This resolution recognizes the important work done by health workers all over the world, every day. I want to particularly draw attention to the health workers in West Africa – the burial teams in Sierra Leone, the nurses in Guinea, and the doctors in Liberia.

They are the heroes in the fight against Ebola, as they, often at great personal risk, are at the front line in the efforts to stop this outbreak. It is therefore fitting that just yesterday, Time Magazine announced that these health workers, the “Ebola fighters”, were named their Person of the Year.
We also salute and honour the hard and important work done by health care workers, especially those working in conflict or emergency situations.

Finally, the group wishes to say a special word of gratitude to the World Health Organization and the ICRC, who assisted these negotiations from the beginning in Geneva until its final meeting in New York. We also thank all delegations involved, who engaged constructively along the process, and showed the necessary flexibility to allow us to arrive at the comprehensive, consensus resolution we have before us today.

As we pass on the leadership of the group to Senegal, who will guide us through next year's resolution, I wish them the best of luck.

The group of seven is pleased with today's outcome and hopes to be able to continue to contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing international debate on the global health and foreign policy agenda.

Thank you.