

Social and Cultural Rights;<sup>25</sup> Urges that the US Government fully support the United Nations and all other efforts to monitor early signs of genocide.

1. Urges that the US Government address the conditions of ignorance, poverty and lack of accountability that enable some leaders to foment genocide.
2. Urges the US Government to publicly announce its support for the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights and to actively pursue actualization of economic and social rights that would help undermine harmful economic, social or political conditions that are often responsible for armed conflict.
3. Urges that the US Government fully support the establishment of a voluntary UN force, and provide a fair share of funding and support to its effective operation as prescribed in HR 4453 whenever innocent human lives or ethnic groups are specifically targeted by hostile forces or a sovereign nation
4. Urges the Administration to sign and the Senate to ratify the Rome Statute on International Criminal Court and to pursue the extradition of any leader actively supporting war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide.

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## 200031: Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Health Information on the Internet

The American Public Health Association,

Noting that in 1998 more than 22 million Americans went to the Internet for health-related answers, and expecting this number to grow to 33.5 million in 2000;<sup>1</sup> and

Finding that nearly 70 percent of those searching for health care information on the Internet did so before visiting a doctor's office;<sup>2</sup> and

Realizing that the Internet can be a valuable resource for users seeking health information and presents a powerful mechanism for helping users improve their health care decision-making by providing easy and rapid access, exchange, and dissemination of enormous amounts of health information; and

Acknowledging that the quality of health information is critically important, as it could potentially affect health outcomes for millions; and

Understanding that the quality of health information on the Internet is extremely variable and difficult to assess; and

Recognizing that health information is proliferating on the Internet and that there is a growing need for objective, reproducible, widely accepted criteria that can be used to evaluate the quality of the information; and

Building on APHA's long-standing commitment to accurate health education (Resolution 7320<sup>6</sup> and Position Paper 7742<sup>7</sup>), especially on controversial topics (Resolution 8524<sup>8</sup>) on APHA's long-standing belief in preventing health fraud through provision of accurate health information (Resolution 8813<sup>9</sup>), and on APHA's long-standing concern with the role of the electronic media health education (Resolutions 5202<sup>10</sup> and 7622<sup>11</sup>); and

Aware that as of June 24, 1999, the United States Federal Trade Commission had found 800 Internet sites containing inaccurate health claims, and undertook settlements with four businesses accused of deceptively marketing health products on the Internet; and

Noting that incidents relating to health-related websites demonstrated the blurring of lines between objective information, advertising, promotional content, and proper disclosure;<sup>3</sup> and

Highlighting the time-sensitive nature of this issues; and

Understanding that users must be made aware of the potential for misinformation and recognize the critical need to assess the quality of the information provided; and

Discerning that the choice of appropriate evaluation criteria for the information is crucial and that no uniform guidelines for quality assessment of Internet-based health information existed until the Health Summit Working Group produced the policy paper,<sup>4</sup> Criteria for Assessing the Quality of Health Information on the Internet;<sup>5</sup> and

Recognizing that the Health Summit Working Group selected, defined, ranked, and evaluated seven major criteria for assessing the quality of Internet health information: credibility, content, disclosure, links, design, interactivity, and caveats (advisories); and

Observing that content providers must be encouraged to develop and post high-quality information, and policymakers and health care professionals must be educated on this important health issue; therefore,

1. Urges individuals and organizations to become involved in promoting the application of appropriate criteria for assessing health information on the Internet, whether it be

- Educating consumers and health care professionals on how to evaluate Internet health information,
  - Using criteria to develop their own Internet health site, or
  - Promoting the use of educational tools to help assess quality;
2. Supports continued FTC monitoring and enforcement of fraudulent health claims and deceptive health marketing on the Internet;
  3. Endorses the development, publication, and dissemination of criteria for evaluating Internet health information that address such items as those defined by the Health Summit Working Group:
    - Credibility: includes the source, currency, relevance/utility, editorial review process for the information, and financial disclosure,
    - Content: must be accurate and complete, and appropriate disclaimer provided,
    - Disclosure: includes informing the user of the purpose of the site, as well as any profiling or collection of information associated with using the site,
    - Links: evaluated according to selection, architecture, content, and back linkages,
    - Design: encompasses accessibility, logical organization (navigability), and internal search capability,
    - Interactivity: includes feedback mechanisms and means for exchange of information among users,
    - Caveats: clarification of whether the site's primary function is to market products and services or to serve as a primary information content provider.

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## 200032: Discontinuation of the Use of the Island-Municipality of Vieques, P.R., for the US Navy's Training Exercises

The American Public Health Association,

Recognizing the broad consensus among the people of Puerto Rico regarding the immediate cessation of the US Navy's military exercises in the Island-Municipality of Vieques, P. R., and the imminent risks faced by the population in view of the US Navy's resumption of exercises and the recent arrests of nearly three hundred civil disobedients considered as interfering with the military maneuvers;<sup>1,2</sup> and

Understanding that although the US Navy has been in Puerto Rico during the last sixty years, the extent of the damage caused by the Navy's maneuvers had not been assessed until the Governor of Puerto Rico commissioned a task force, which rendered a report in June 1999; and

Acknowledging that the findings of said Commission were not widely disclosed until June-July 1999;<sup>3,4</sup> and

Acknowledging that the US Navy permanently occupies two-thirds of the island's nearly nine thousand acres and that 180 days per year, they engage in military exercises that involve shelling the island with live ammunition, including depleted uranium ammunition without the authorization of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.<sup>5</sup> launched from the air by the U. S. Air Force attack planes as well as from naval vessels at sea to areas eight miles from where the 10,000 inhabitants of Vieques work and live; and

Realizing that the US Navy assumed responsibility for the most recent accident that resulted in the death of a civilian employee, who was killed by a 500 pound Mark 82 missile; and

Acknowledging that officials from Puerto Rico's Department of Education testified to the Governor's Commission of Vieques that "...bombing practices make school buildings tremble, affecting the teaching activities and damaging the physical structures";<sup>3</sup> and

Knowing that the Environmental Protection Agency stated on August 27, 1999, that the US Navy has violated the norms established for the disposal of contaminated discharges and has, according to EPA officials, demonstrated an incapacity to comply with the agency's regulations;<sup>6</sup> and

Understanding that samples obtained by a group of marine biologists from the coral reefs in Vieques located in close proximity to unexploded leaking bombs reveal highly diseased and discolored coral specimens, and magnetometer studies performed by the same group reveal unequivocally that craters on the seaward side of Isla Alcatraz, which are pock-marking coral reefs and sea grass beds in the region, were not originated by hurricanes but by detonation of ammunition;<sup>7</sup> and

Recognizing that Puerto Rico's Health Department's Cancer Registry, published in Nov-

ember 1999,<sup>8</sup> and showing cancer trends for Vieques and the main Island of Puerto Rico for 1960-1994, demonstrate that, prior to 1979, Vieques exhibited cancer rates lower than those of the main Island, whereas the cancer rates for Vieques subsequently increased, generating standardized incidence ratios for the periods 1985-1989 and 1990-1994 that exceed the alert levels adopted by the surveillance system as defined by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry of the US Department of Health and Human Services, prompting the Puerto Rican Legislature<sup>9</sup> to mandate an epidemiological study of the cancer rates in Vieques; and

Realizing that the current conditions to which the people of Vieques are exposed constitute serious threats to the environment and to their health; and

Recognizing the right of the people of Puerto Rico to take the necessary actions to assure their well-being; therefore

1. Calls upon the President of the United States to order the permanent cessation of military exercises in the Island-Municipality of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and transfer of the present occupied land to the people of Vieques; and

2. Calls upon the President to order the U S Department of Defense to immediately establish a clean-up program that will facilitate the prompt restitution of the Island's environment and that will include the necessary steps that must be taken to mitigate the threats to the health of the people of Vieques for which the US Navy is responsible.

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