



AIM Healthcare and
social benefits
for all

Solidarity: the only way to ensure a good future for ourselves and our children and grandchildren

Opening speech of AIM president Loek Caubo

at the General Assembly in Vienna, 9 June 2022

At the opening of our previous meeting, I referred to the horrors of the times in which we live. The war in Ukraine has already caused many thousands of deaths and injuries and has dramatically changed the lives of millions of people. One of our Polish colleagues gave an impressive overview of the work being done in her country to receive refugees. In other European countries, too, efforts are being made to provide those who have fled Ukraine with what they urgently need. Our members in Poland, Hungary and in the Czech Republic are also doing a great deal to welcome and integrate the refugees. But not only, all European members stand side by side in solidarity and try to do their best to accommodate those people who are fleeing their homes. The war in that country, which began on 24 February, is claiming many more victims every day, and unfortunately the end is not yet in sight.

Besides this European war, other parts of the world have been affected by wars, violence and crises for much longer. Our Lebanese friends know what it means to have to receive and accommodate large streams of refugees for years. In the Middle East and on the African continent, conflict and war have been raging for many years, often threatening the very lives of the poorest.

In addition to all those who are the direct victims of wars, the lives of billions of others are also indirectly affected by them. I would like to mention the danger of famine in large parts of the world that is a direct result of the war in Ukraine. Russia is using this impending disaster in its negotiations and is trying to blackmail the rest of the world with it.

And I have not yet mentioned what is perhaps the greatest crisis that poses an enormous threat to life on earth: the climate crisis. A crisis that we (especially the rich countries) have caused and are still causing together. Tackling it cannot wait another day but is only getting off the ground with difficulty and most probably will be pushed back by the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis.

All in all, not a picture that inspires optimism. It is a picture that calls for action. Not only from the men and women in power and from our governments. But also, from every organisation and every individual. It is of the utmost importance that not everyone "tries to clean up his own street", but that we work together: that the rich help the poor and the strong help the weak. And that brings us back to the theme we discussed last November in Berlin: solidarity. The COVID pandemic, which is still with us today, has been put in the background at the moment. Developments since then underline the importance to remain vigilant.

As members of AIM, solidarity runs in our veins: we work together every day to ensure the availability of good healthcare and social security for all our members. This makes us only a small cog in the machinery of the big world. But not an unimportant cog, because the issues we deal with are among the basic conditions for a good life. And apart from that: the situation in the world calls for everyone's efforts, so all the cogs matter. As we said in Berlin, solidarity is not automatic, it is something that has to be fought for, something we have to work hard for. Especially in times of crisis, the danger of self-interest is lurking. But we know better than anyone that it is precisely in times of crisis that it is necessary to act from a position of solidarity, also from a position of 'well-understood self-interest'.

AIM and its members can play a role in this in various ways. In the first place, of course, by continuing to do their work well on a basis of solidarity. But also by spreading the message of 'solidarity' and showing and convincing others that this is the only way to ensure a good future for ourselves and our children and grandchildren.