Honourable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA) appreciates the progress made by the WHO and its Member States in fully utilising their capacities to respond to the unprecedented situation we are currently living in.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the challenges in our public health systems and has revealed that severe and large-scale emergencies cannot be mitigated by our current health security systems.

To respond more effectively to the ongoing pandemic and to further prepare ourselves for health emergencies in the future, we call on the Member States of South-East Asia to invest in their health systems through a comprehensive national plan and an emergency fund to contribute towards the attainment of Universal Health Coverage. We further urge the member states to support the work of the WHO in Health Emergencies and mobilise sustainable funding.

No health emergency can be tackled without evidence-based information and the involvement of aid agencies, non-state actors, youth-led organizations, and media. Continuous intersectional communication and open sharing of relevant data with researchers, aid agencies, non-state actors and health care professionals hold utmost importance to facilitate public health emergency preparedness and responses.

IFMSA stresses meaningful youth engagement in the decision-making processes. We call upon the inclusion of healthcare students in the decision-making process, such as but not limited to the development and implementation of health emergency protocols and preventive strategies.

We call on the Member States to understand the rising prominence of social media, to develop strategies in adherence to the Risk Communication Strategy for Public Health Emergencies in the WHO South-East Asia Region 2019-23 and disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate health emergency protocols and information to combat misinformation. We appreciate the WHO’s Risk Communication Strategy and call for further support in Health Emergencies.

Thank you for your attention.

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