Honourable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA) believes that all children and adolescents have the right to opportunities to survive, grow and develop with physical, emotional and social well-being. This includes the opportunity to gain information that keeps them healthy. Since the 1950s, the WHO has emphasized the importance of school health and demonstrated how it can help improve the health of children and adolescents. IFMSA urges Member States to be more proactive in providing health education to children and adolescents.

The WHO’s Global School Health Initiative along with various government initiatives have tried to introduce health education on various topics like interpersonal violence, sexual and reproductive health, communicable and non-communicable diseases and mental health issues. However, there is often a lack of evidence-based education and outreach, especially in more rural areas. Health-promoting schools present a great opportunity to impart health-related skills and knowledge to young people, and provide a space for peer education.

Beyond addressing school health, IFMSA acknowledges that outreach to those who are not enrolled in formal educational institutions is critical in leaving nobody behind. We call upon Member States and the relevant stakeholders to ensure equitable and accessible health services, prevention and promotion strategies to all children and adolescents, particularly those employed in hazardous places.

IFMSA mobilises healthcare students for public health awareness and to promote school health education at various levels. With a smaller generation gap, and being well-equipped with relevant medical information and non-formal educational methodologies, this enables future healthcare professionals to understand and better communicate with students about more sensitive topics. Student organisations can provide capacitated individuals, resources and meaningful youth participation. IFMSA firmly believes that collaborations with Member States and other relevant stakeholders can prove incredibly beneficial for every party involved. We call upon Member States to ensure active and meaningful input from children and adolescents in the development of all policies and programs related to school health. Additionally, we urge Member States to ensure that campaigning efforts focus on the adoption of non-violent social and cultural norms.

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we have to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Therefore, we must strive to make child and adolescent health and rights-related topics a political and financial priority in international health and development discussion.

Thank you for your attention.

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