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IPA Statement at the 74th WHO Regional Committee of South-East Asia on Agenda 8.1: Accelerating progress on prevention and control of NCDs, including oral health and integrated eye care, in the WHO South-East Asia Region

As the world continues to grapple with waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges that extend beyond COVID-19 continue to prevail, particularly in the prevention and control of NCDs. The International Pediatric Association urges member states to protect and promote the rights of children and young people living with NCDs in both high- and low-income settings.

NCD in children needs to be a priority. We applaud the WHO’s Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020, and the Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (GCM/NCD). However, continued integration of child and adolescent health into the NCD agenda is essential.

Affordable access to essential medicine is a fundamental priority. WHO and member states are urged to ensure that all children and adolescents with NCD, regardless of who they are and where they live, have access to affordably available life-saving treatment and care. When access to affordable care is not guaranteed by countries, poverty is exacerbated by the high cost of medicines and loss of income associated with accessing quality care at tertiary and quaternary centers far from home. The issue of affordable access is one whose effects transcend sectors, influencing not only the ability for a child to attain their rights of life and quality care, but also the family’s ability to fulfill their basic needs; hence it has to be completely secured.

The prevention and control of NCDs is highly linked to the level of knowledge and understanding of NCDs. Despite digitalization and the integration of information, knowledge and skill gaps amongst healthcare professionals, children and families are still of concern. Access to accurate information as well as education and training that is tailored to the specific language and culture of the community is essential for adequate prevention and control of NCDs, elimination of myths and misinformation and build understanding of social stigma, beliefs and attitudes. As a global organization with 165 member organizations of leading pediatricians globally, IPA places the education and training of pediatricians and healthcare professionals of high importance.

Action needed to address inequities in the prevention and control of childhood NCDs require time and commitment from a broad range of stakeholders, including local communities, families and governments. We urge WHO to initiate and implement programs that tackle the hard-hitting issues on the rights and needs of children and young people who are living with NCDs, particularly in the South-East Asia Region where these types of programs are barely available. A multi-stakeholder coalition is crucial to secure longer term and sustainable solutions at a time of uncertainty amidst COVID-19 pandemic that we are all facing. As a respected official partner of WHO, IPA has always been ready to collaborate with member states and partners across the globe to ensure that every child, every age, everywhere has access to the care and life they deserve.

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