8.5 Strengthening public health emergency preparedness and response in South-East Asia Region
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Honorable Chair, Distinguished delegates,

It is a great honour to speak on behalf of the International Pharmaceutical Students’ Federation (IPSF) which represents the voice of over 500,000 pharmaceutical students and recent graduates worldwide.

IPSF commends WHO and Member States for the great efforts in making considerable progress to advance public health emergency preparedness and response in the Region, especially by controlling transmission and saving lives during the pandemic of COVID-19. Emergency risk management has been one of the Regional Flagship Priority Programmes of the South-East Asia Region since 2014. IPSF recognises the significant impact of reaching the unreached and the need for better governance and more resilient health systems and capacities during this unprecedented time.

IPSF believes that strengthening emergency preparedness is not limited to risk identification, risk mapping and development of strategic plans. It requires extensive coordination and management from multiple stakeholders for effective response and preparedness to public health emergencies to prevailing risks and threats. Ensuring effective collaboration of the different sectors increases readiness to meet emergencies, responsiveness to its effects, and capabilities to recover from its outcomes.

IPSF encourages all relevant stakeholders to recognise the importance of NGOs and youth activities in their efforts to improve risk communication strategies and approaches to societies. IPSF itself has been optimising the involvement of youth in advocacy through global, regional, national and local approaches. We spearheaded events and health campaigns with relevant stakeholders for better health education to equip the public and future health professionals with the awareness and knowledge required to debunk the misinformation, and prepare and respond to health emergencies.

IPSF prompts Member States on the need to adopt prohealth policies, redesigned workflow in healthcare settings, detailed crisis protocol systems, and secure more funding that is adaptable for long-term plan implementation to respond to the health emergency. This includes adequate compensation for healthcare professionals to maintain more sustainable service delivery.

IPSF calls the WHO and Member States to expand the role of Pharmacists to actively contribute to strengthening public health emergencies. Pharmacists are in a position to ensure sustained action to achieve global health security and avoid the catastrophic impact of global health emergencies in the future. We are at the frontline in preventing, detecting, treating and managing health emergencies through reliable information, appropriate monitoring of the rational usage of drugs, vaccination, researches on vaccines and drug development, communication and counselling with patients. Medical and health curricula should be refined to address the emerging changes and needs in public health with the integration of interdisciplinary approaches.

Thank you.