8.6 Revitalizing School Health and Health-promoting School in the South-East Asia Region
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Honourable 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.

With the ongoing pandemic in most countries, including the South-East Asia Region, there is a tremendous impact on the health and well-being of children and adolescents. IPSF recognises the importance of schools and school health programmes in minimising childhood mortality, promoting healthy behaviour and providing a safe environment for children and adolescents.

Although digital learning lights up the hope for others, students from underprivileged backgrounds will fall further behind due to the financial gaps and limited access to technologies. Hence, comprehensive efforts should be made to support health programmes and practices that can accelerate improved health and well-being in school-aged children.

While schools are forced to adjust to the glaring gaps in the education system, we urge WHO and all Member States to continuously uphold the School Health Programme during these unprecedented times in delivering health services and strengthening health education. This includes equipping schools with public health preparedness and implementing health measures as the new normal. We also highlight the importance of equitable technology access that outreach rural areas for more sustainable outcomes.

COVID-19 has refocused attention on the role pharmacists can play in public health planning and emergency preparedness. Through health screenings and health education, pharmacists play a key role in prevention as well as access to care. IPSF calls for WHO and its member states in cultivating pharmacists and pharmacy students to be competent in areas of health promotion through continuous professional learning and training. In order to facilitate further development of pharmacists’ competencies, greater inclusion of public health concepts should be integrated into the school curriculum and encourage transdisciplinary collaborations with various stakeholders to develop legislation and advocate for plans that address health care needs.

Thank you.