FIGO statements to 75th session of WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia

9.1 Regional Plan of Action for the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change 2020–2030: Healthy Environments for Healthier Populations (SEA/RC72/R4)

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics supports the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change, and urges national, regional and global action.

The global health community is increasingly linking health issues with pollution and climate change. The climate crisis has become a public health emergency that disproportionately affects pregnant people, children, and those from disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

Each year millions of people are affected by natural and man-made disasters around the world, no less so in South-East Asia. Climate change is directly resulting in increased cyclones, heatwaves, droughts, wildfires and floods and indirectly impacting on air quality and water quality, including access to water and sanitation necessary for safe maternal delivery.

Extreme weather can release harmful chemicals and exacerbate the health impacts of air pollution. In addition, it highlights how fossil fuels not only drive climate change, but petroleum and natural gas are ingredients for plastics and other consumer products that contain phthalates, flame retardant chemicals, and PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) – all endocrine-disrupting chemicals that can increase the risk of adverse health effects.

Production of these chemicals has steadily increased since the 1950s and corresponds to a dramatic increase in health problems affecting women and their families such as diabetes, fertility problems, cancer, and neurodevelopmental disorders.1

FIGO will support the WHO and Member States and calls on governments and policy makers to take action immediately to implement policies that address and reduce the root causes of climate change. In doing so, they can improve the environments in which their populations live, so that we might secure a safer, brighter future for all of humankind.