Statement on Provisional Agenda Item 9.1

Item 9.1 Regional Plan of Action for the WHO Global Strategy on Health, Environment and Climate Change 2020–2030: Healthy Environments for Healthier Populations

Seventy-fifth Session of the WHO Regional Committee of the South-East Asia

Honourable Chair, Distinguished delegates,

The World Heart Federation, South East Asia Regional NCD Alliance, Healthy India Alliance (India NCD Alliance) and the NCD Alliance, welcome the progress report on the regional plan of action for the global strategy on health, environment, and climate change.

We thank you for this opportunity to highlight the critical issue of air pollution in particular: indoor and ambient air pollution, being one of the most important risk factors for heart attack, stroke, diabetes and respiratory diseases. Exposure to air pollution has also been linked with increased vulnerability to severe consequences of COVID-19. In 2019, an estimated 6.7 million deaths, or 12 percent of all deaths worldwide, were attributable to outdoor or household air pollution. Yet progress in turning policy recommendations into concrete actions has been slow, and those living in low-resource settings are especially vulnerable to and disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of air pollution. There is an urgent need for embedding interventions to address air pollution as a major NCD risk factor, in global, regional and national NCD action plans. Achievement of SDGs and UHC also warrants that health systems are made climate resilient.

Fortunately, there are many effective multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder strategies to reduce air pollution and the harm it causes to people’s health. Our recent policy brief outlines these key measures and investments, such as patient-level intervention, active transport, energy-efficient homes, industry regulation, and access to clean fuel and technologies.

Physicians, scientific societies, foundations, civil society organizations, people with lived experiences, and policymakers all have a key role to play in reducing the negative impacts of air pollution and identify strategies to address air pollution from a health and NCDs lens and not just as an environmental issue. We look forward to working closely with our partners in the SEAR to combat the environmental determinants of health as they work to implement the regional plan of action. Thank you.