Statement of the
International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA)
75th Regional Committee for the WHO South East Asia Region

Provisional Agenda Item 9.5
Ending preventable maternal, newborn and child mortality in the South-East Asia Region in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and Global Strategy on Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health

Honourable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA) appreciates Member States’ contributions, progress and innovations to end preventable mortality of every woman, every child, and every adolescent (EWECEA) in the region. Reflecting upon the staggering rates of maternal, newborn and child (MNC) mortality, IFMSA is deeply concerned by our current progress to achieve Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)-related targets as we are 8 years away from 2030 and still recovering from the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic has on the delivery and quality of essential RMNCAH health services, as well as exacerbated inequities during the pandemic.

To sustain the gains and accelerate progress, we call upon Member States to align and contextualize policies and guidelines with the latest evidence-based interventions recommended by WHO. We further urge Member States to ensure the implementation along with effective monitoring, evaluation, reporting and continuous quality improvement (e.g. POCQI). We recommend Member States to invest and strengthen PHC services, in addition to building health professionals capacity as strategic direction to improve coverage and enhance quality of RMNCAH health services.

Having considered the importance of the life-course approach, the IFMSA underscores the importance for extended measures to protect and care for the health of adolescents so that we do not risk the reversal of hard-won advances in preventable MNC mortality. Therefore, we urge Member States to expand their focus from “the first 1,000 days” to “the first 8,000 days” so that children can reach their full developmental potential, and increase focus on promoting comprehensive sexuality education and ensuring access to contraception.

To ensure that “Leave no one behind” is not just another developmental slogan, IFMSA calls upon Member States to address gaps in healthcare faced by vulnerable populations by adopting intersectional approach, as well as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principle in each and every stages of policy and program development and implementation. Moreover, IFMSA urges Member States to ensure accurate birth registration and provide birth certificates for those unregistered.

IFMSA reiterates the importance of promoting research and disaggregated data collection to develop gender-responsive policies and programs. We further encourage Member States to adopt gender-inclusive laws and policies on access to healthcare services, specifically ensuring access to safe abortion. These
laws and policies needs to be inclusive, health-focused, evidence-based and recognize access to safe abortion as a human right, as recommended in the 2022 WHO Abortion Care guideline. IFMSA also encourages Member States to review and tighten their laws to abolish child marriage and eliminate harmful traditional practices that disproportionately affects girls and contribute greatly to MNC mortality.

We believe that the responsibility of accelerating the EWECEA strategy goes beyond the mandate of a single agency. Hence, we call upon the pentahelix stakeholders to mainstream partnership as an approach and systematically create an enabling ecosystem in which partnership can scale up evidence-based RMNCAH programs and catalyze innovation like MPDSR and SEAR-NBDD.

Thank you for your attention.
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