

International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)

Agenda 9.6- Promoting physical activity in the WHO South-East Asia Region

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) applauds WHO and Member States for prioritizing physical activity as a public health strategy in the South-East Asia Region. Insufficient physical activity is a leading risk factor for noncommunicable diseases, contributing to nearly 5 million preventable deaths globally each year. In our Region, more than 1 in 4 adults and over 80% of adolescents fail to meet WHO-recommended activity levels, fueling obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and mental health disorders.

Despite growing awareness, structural, social, and cultural barriers persist. Rapid urbanization, unsafe roads, limited green spaces, and inadequate integration of activity into schools and workplaces hinder sustainable behavior change. These inequities particularly affect women, youth, and marginalized groups.

We, the IFMSA, representing 1.5 million medical students worldwide, urge WHO and Member States to:

1. Implement multisectoral policies embedding physical activity into schools, workplaces, transport, and urban planning.
2. Guarantee equitable access to safe, inclusive, and culturally appropriate spaces for exercise, recreation, and active transport.
3. Engage youth in designing and leading community-based initiatives that foster lifelong active lifestyles.
4. Integrate physical activity promotion into preventive healthcare, maternal and child health, and public health campaigns.
5. Establish monitoring and evaluation systems to track participation, health outcomes, and equity impacts.

Physical activity is a cost-effective, high-impact intervention that strengthens health, prevents disease, and builds resilient communities. By embedding activity into daily life and ensuring youth leadership, the Region can secure sustainable health gains for current and future generations.