

International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)

Agenda 8.1- Annual report on monitoring progress on UHC and health-related SDGs

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) welcomes the annual report on progress toward Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the South-East Asia Region. UHC and the SDGs are more than performance targets; they are commitments to equity, social justice, and sustainable development.

Despite notable progress, major gaps remain. In 2021, 1.6 billion people globally lacked access to essential health services, with the SEAR among the most affected. The Region also faces high levels of financial hardship, with nearly 300 million people pushed into poverty annually due to out-of-pocket health expenditures. Coverage of essential services varies widely—rural populations, women, children, and marginalized groups continue to bear the heaviest burden of inequities, reflecting persistent health system fragility and uneven distribution of resources.

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

- 1. Strengthen monitoring systems to generate accurate, timely, and disaggregated data that capture inequalities in UHC and SDG progress.**
- 2. Invest in equitable service delivery, prioritizing primary health care, preventive services, and universal access to essential medicines.**
- 3. Ensure inclusive financial protection mechanisms to prevent catastrophic and impoverishing health expenditures.**
- 4. Integrate youth perspectives in policy design, implementation, and evaluation, recognizing young people as innovators and accountability partners.**

UHC is not just a target, it is a promise to leave no one behind. Accelerating progress and closing equity gaps will safeguard health, advance resilience, and drive the Region toward a healthier and more sustainable future.