

International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)

Agenda 8.4- Regional Strategic Framework for combating smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products and areca nut in the WHO South-East Asia Region

Honourable Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

IFMSA commends the WHO and Member States for prioritizing a Regional Strategic Framework on smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products, and areca nut. These harmful products fuel an immense burden of disease in the South-East Asia Region, home to over 280 million smokeless tobacco users, 77% of the global total. The Region records more than 3 million tobacco-related deaths annually, with children and youth disproportionately harmed through early initiation, second-hand smoke, and indoor air pollution.

We are alarmed by the rising popularity of e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, driven by aggressive marketing and social normalization. Weak regulation risks undoing decades of progress in tobacco control and undermining the right of young people to grow up in healthy, smoke-free environments. With FCTC COP11 and MOP4 approaching, Member States have a crucial opportunity to reinforce global and regional commitments.

Therefore, we, the IFMSA, representing 1.5 million medical students worldwide, call upon WHO and Member States to:

- 1. Implement and monitor the Framework with measurable targets and accountability, aligned with FCTC obligations.**
- 2. Strengthen smoke-free laws to shield communities from second-hand smoke and indoor pollution.**
- 3. Integrate prevention, cessation, and awareness programmes into schools, maternal and child health services, and community health systems.**
- 4. Ensure meaningful youth participation in shaping and monitoring tobacco control policies.**
- 5. As future physicians, we refuse to accept a future where preventable harm from tobacco, nicotine, and areca nut persists. We urge Member States to act with ambition, urgency, and accountability—because the health and resilience of our Region depend on it.**