

WRITTEN STATEMENT

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations

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

Honorable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) embraces the report monitoring the Southeast Asian region's progress on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We would like to commend the continued progress of the region, best demonstrated through the maintained increase in the UHC Service Coverage Index, of which the Southeast Asian region boasts the largest improvement between 2000 and 2023. This reaffirms our shared recognition of the importance of UHC and SDGs as not just targets to achieve but essential means required to achieve equity, social justice and sustainable development.

However, as articulated by the report, this improvement is uneven across the region. There remains a persistently high 22.3% of the population experiencing devastating Out of Pocket spending in 2022 and the gap between Health life expectancy (HALE) and overall life expectancy remains steady at 10 years since 2000 indicating that additional years of life are not matched by proportional improvements in health quality. Further, the region is among the world's most climate vulnerable, with marginalised and lesser-privileged communities bearing the brunt of climate related hazards such as cyclones, extreme heat and rises in sea levels. This reflects inequities in current health administration and its consequences.

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

- Provide technical guidance to member states to implement intersectional approaches to UHC, fostering equity in healthcare services, and upholding policies that provide underprivileged groups fair access to health services
- Ensure inclusive financial protection mechanisms that prevent catastrophic expenditures and shield households from poverty
- Monitor the progress of initiatives related to the UHC2030 Action Agenda and highlight any delays or obstacles, sharing best practices on the international level.
- Meaningfully engage young people and health professional students in policy design, implementation, and evaluation, recognizing them as accountable partners and future custodians of health systems

UHC and SDG progress is a noble cause but progress shouldn't come at the cost of some and benefit just few. By closing gaps in equity and ensuring development is sustainable, future healthcare can be safeguarded to ensure a better tomorrow for all.