

ORAL STATEMENT

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations

9.4 Paro Declaration by the Health Ministers of Member States at the Seventy-fifth session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia on universal access to people-centred mental health care and services (SEA/RC75/R1)

Honorable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) believes that mental health is an indisputable and fundamental human right and praises the Paro Declaration as an insightful and crucial step forwards toward achieving mental healthcare for all and the subsequent Mental Health Action Plan as instrumental in the future enactment of policies which strengthen mental health networks regionwide.

The South-East Asian region is home to 260 million of 1 billion people suffering from mental health conditions, with severe mental disorders decreasing life expectancy of a patient by 10 to 20 years attributable to associated comorbidities and alcohol use disorders. Despite this, investment in mental health remains low across the region, being below 1 USD in some countries. Decreased access to mental health facilities and the stigma surrounding it also causes the perpetuation of large treatment gaps especially in low-income countries.

The IFMSA acknowledges the significant burden mental health disorders have globally and strongly recommends for the implementation of evidence-based initiatives focused on prevention, early intervention and the elimination of stigma and discrimination. Agreeing with the Paro declaration as well that there is need for community engagement, we call for youth involvement in developing programmes and policies as a partner to utilise our insights and ensure increased awareness and commitment in joining the fight against mental health stigma and undertreatment for a mentally healthy tomorrow.