

WPR/RC77/2 AGENDA ITEM 7

ADDRESS BY AND REPORT OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Honorable Chairperson,
Regional Director,
Distinguished Ministers and Delegates,

I speak on behalf of the World Heart Federation, Children's HeartLink, and the Global Coalition for Pediatric and Congenital Hearts, an alliance of over 200 organizations and individuals from 50 countries working to ensure that every child living with heart disease can reach timely, quality care.

We thank the Regional Director for his report and welcome its message that health throughout the life course succeeds only when anchored in strong primary health care. Yet, more than 840 million people in this Region still lack easy access to essential services.

Childhood-onset heart disease shows what that gap costs. Congenital heart disease affects at least 1 in 100 births, and some Pacific Island countries carry among the highest burdens of rheumatic heart disease in the world. Too many children are diagnosed late or not at all, and survivors need lifelong care. Yet these conditions remain largely invisible in NCD, UHC, and child survival policies, strategies, and plans.

The Region's work shows the way forward, from Samoa's new National Surgical, Obstetric and Anaesthesia Plan to school health programmes across the Pacific: platforms through which early detection, timely surgery and lifelong follow-up can reach every child.

To make that possible, our Coalition is advancing a resolution on childhood-onset heart disease for the 80th World Health Assembly in May 2027. We are grateful to Egypt and Namibia for their leadership and to Vietnam for its support, and hope Member States of this Region will join them.

We respectfully call on Member States to co-sponsor the proposed resolution and to reflect childhood-onset heart disease in national child health, NCD and UHC plans as part of the *Weaving Health for All* vision.

No child should die of a heart condition we know how to treat.

Thank you.