Honourable Chairperson, Distinguished delegates, Honourable Regional Director, representatives and delegates of the WHO European Region Member States,

We, the International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations, are convinced that access to medicines, vaccines and health care is a basic human right.

COVID-19 has been a huge threat to health systems and human health globally with far-reaching impacts. Worldwide vaccination is our only way out of this urgent emergency to rebuild our systems and protect ourselves and those at risk. With the grade of vaccination increasing in many countries in the European Region, the matter of third doses has arisen, with the aim to boost immunity against COVID-19.

Amidst this debate, we would like to underline that the decision of booster vaccines needs to be made based on solid, independent evidence regarding their effectiveness and safety. For this, we urge member states and the WHO to support such initiatives throughout the European Region and worldwide.

Though the vaccination grade within the WHO European Region has reached 69.4%, according to the ECDC, this has unfortunately not been the case for all countries. The richer nations have secured more than enough doses to immunise their populations, while developing economies have large difficulty with small amounts of vaccines. Vaccine nationalism serves none of us; widespread vaccination is necessary to contain the spread of the virus and the rise of new variants; it is the key to achieving a speedy recovery around the globe.

Thus, we call on all Member States to continue tackling COVID-19 from an international and global perspective, by contributing to the COVAX movement and ensuring price transparency, to ensure access to the vaccine to all.

Lastly, we would underline that access to medicine and vaccines must be a continuous focus and must remain an important issue, transcending the COVID-19 pandemic, for the WHO and our member states. International, coordinated efforts to ensure access to medicine and vaccination, such as the Immunisation Agenda 2030, are essential for our work in achieving health for all and reducing health inequalities.

Thank you for your time.