



# IFMSA

International Federation of  
Medical Students' Associations

## **Statement of International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) 69th World Health Assembly, Geneva, Switzerland**

### **Agenda item 12.1 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition**

Honorable Chair,

Nutrition is considered an essential component in achieving a high standard of health. However, increasingly nutrition is contributing to a growing burden of disease instead.

We live in an obesogenic environment, and from the start of the life-course, there is a cumulative exposure to risk over time which results in the catastrophic increase in the burden of non-communicable, nutrition-related disease which we are seeing worldwide.

We affirm that clear, important steps need to be taken to reduce the burden of nutrition related disease.

Firstly, to ensure we have healthy mothers we must create a healthy environment, instead of the current one which drives individuals to make unhealthy choices. We implore the international community to use a social determinants of health approach to tackle structural issues that cause this obesogenic environment. Time is running out to see implemented policies such as composition and reformulation, pricing, distribution and marketing, catering, advertising and promotion, labelling amongst others.

Secondly, we must ensure that policies are in place to preserve the health of children in their first 1000 days of life. The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes was agreed in 1981 to help protect the quality of infant nutrition and provide mothers a safe space free from the influences of aggressive marketing and promotion by the baby food industry. It is therefore disappointing to see that only 40 out of all the member states have fully implemented this in national legislation and others have neglected to see this as a priority for their populations.

This state of affairs is indicative of a failure in leadership on this issue. As a representative of 1.3 million medical students worldwide, we find it unacceptable that an excess of 820,000 lives are lost each year due to barriers in healthy breastfeeding practices, barriers this code addresses but many countries refuse.

Thank you.