IFMSA Statement on: 5(c) Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the WHO European Region

66th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reaffirms that prevention and control of NCDs should be a priority. The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA) congratulates the ongoing work of WHO Europe on this issue, but would like to reinforce its increasing importance on children and adolescents’ health.

As young people, we are especially aware of the impact of government policies on our health. We urge member states and all stakeholders to keep reinforcing nutrition and exercise strategies to the youthful population as well as to adults, to prevent downstream effects of an unhealthy lifestyles. We have in our hands the power and responsibility to ensure that children and adolescents fulfill their maximum potential without the threatening burden of NCDs.

Secondly, IFMSA commends the health-in-all-policies approach with intersectoral planning and programming, which is essential in the promotion of healthy lifestyles. It is now the time to put words into action in order to achieve the goals from the Physical Activity Strategy for the European Region by 2025. This strategy gives us a desired direction, a path to follow. But only with strong national and civil society engagement will we be able to make a difference.

Furthermore, we need to recognize the potential health effects of industry products which are risk factors for NCDs, such as foods high in sugar, salt and saturated & trans fats, alcoholic beverages and tobacco. We need to stop focusing on individual behaviour and lifestyle choices and shift the focus to the political and economic systems that drive unhealthy lifestyle choices. Only then can we create policies that effectively protect the people from NCDs.

We recommend governments to ensure that the voices of young people are heard and that youth involvement in the global NCDs movement is increased by advocating for youth-oriented NCD policies and awareness programs at the local, regional and global level.