Statement of the
International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA)
71st World Health Assembly

Agenda Item 11.5 Addressing the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines

Honourable chair,
Distinguished delegates,

We would like to express our deep appreciation of WHO's response to address the global shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines, and warmly welcome the Director-General's report on this matter.

We would like to share with you two observations. Firstly, WHO plays a pivotal role in ensuring access to safe, effective and quality medicines for everyone, everywhere. As projected in the Sustainable Development Goals, the access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all is closely linked to our efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage. Therefore, all actions taken must follow the principle of “leaving no one behind”, because only when we focus our efforts on those who face the most severe obstacles to access health care and medicines, only then we can aspire to transform this goal into reality. This requires a needs-based focus in research, development, and coverage interventions.

Secondly, we encourage all national governments to consider the impact of equitable pricing schemes on access to medicines and vaccines, including pricing control mechanisms to ensure fair access to essential medicines. Each year, 800 million people are forced to pay more than 10% of their household budget on healthcare, putting them at risk of extreme poverty due to catastrophic spending on health. Subsidising essential medicines - and providing further discounts for people experiencing poverty - is essential in ensuring people are able to afford the health products and services they need.

WHO, through its collaboration with governments and other stakeholders, has made significant progress in numerous areas of access to medicines and vaccines. The work needs to continue and expand, and we fully support and encourage such action.

Thank you.