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

Agenda Item 11.6 Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property

Honourable chair,
Distinguished delegates,

In recent decades we have seen enormous progress in health technology, with new innovations and discoveries being made seemingly every day. Yet, 4.8 billion people still live in low- and middle-income countries - and 43% of these people live on less than 2 US dollars a day. Unfortunately, progress has not been uniform.

The prevalence of type II and type III diseases - those that disproportionately affect poorer nations - demonstrates an inequality regarding the global progress towards universal health coverage. Despite the efforts made by governments, the pharmaceutical industry, NGOs and others, more needs to be done.

Globally, strategizing a plan to address these challenges will promote new thinking in innovation, access to medicine, and encourage needs-driven research to target diseases that affect the poor or otherwise vulnerable. Further, ensuring new products and technologies are not held hostage to unfair patent pricings, and that the framework provided by the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health is fully upheld, are essential in ensuring equitable access to new products.

Representing 1.3 million medical students worldwide, IFMSA would like to reaffirm that WHO should play a strategic and central role in the relationship between public health, innovation and intellectual property. We would like to applaud the efforts made by WHO and its member states and welcome the report by the Director-General regarding the overall programme review and the recommendations set forth by the expert panel. As part of the future health workforce, we highlight the potential of technology and innovation to revolutionize healthcare delivery.

We are excited to see this occur in the coming years and decades and committed to take part in it - while highlighting the importance of implementing the above measures.

Thank you.