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

Agenda Item 12.2 Physical activity for health

Honorable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations, representing 1.3 million medical students worldwide, considers addressing physical activity as a priority to prevent Noncommunicable Diseases.

Knowing that physical inactivity constitutes a large proportion of NCDs-related deaths and contributes to billions of dollars in health-care spending, we must act urgently. Rapid urbanization and transportation patterns have accelerated the incidence of physical inactivity, increasing rates of obesity, cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Adolescents are a particularly vulnerable group, as 80% of them don’t meet international physical activity recommendations. Barriers to physical activity in young people are extensive, including lack of health education and increasing use of technology.

Therefore, IFMSA emphasizes the importance of recognizing youths as a key target population in the implementation of measures to promote physical activity. We invite education ministries and institutions to promote physical activity in schools and implement sufficient sports periods.

We also call all stakeholders for multi-sectoral investments in sports-adapted infrastructures like cycling and pedestrian roads, and natural parks in urban areas. Furthermore, we invite parties to implement public health awareness campaigns to promote physical activity. Finally, we encourage health ministries and universities to include healthy lifestyle promotion as a key competency for the future health workforce.

We welcome the global action plan for physical activity 2018-2030 and its implementation and we want to congratulate the WHO with their Walk the Talk run to celebrate their 70th anniversary as a creative example to promote physical activity. All of us, from students and youth, to health professionals, to member states, must unite and work for a more physically active society and therefore a healthier world.

Thank you.