



**Statement of the  
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)**

**Sixty-ninth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa  
*Agenda item 12: Universal Health Coverage***

Honourable chair,

Distinguished delegates,

The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) represents 1.3 million medical students from over 100 countries across the globe. IFMSA is represented by 21 national member organisations in the African region, who all show their commitment to UHC through various trainings, activities and campaigns to equip future health professionals with the required skills and knowledge.

Africa's growing youthful population presents with many opportunities: Indeed, if harnessed very well, young Africans' talents and skills will be immensely useful in achieving many of the targets set for our region, including achieving UHC by 2030. However, meaningful youth engagement still lacks on all levels of policy making. We would, therefore, like to call on the WHO and its African Member States to support and make space for youth participation and input, for as the saying goes, "it is the young trees that make up the forest".

Furthermore, IFMSA would like to encourage the strengthening of health systems, with a direct focus on health workforce. The region requires a potent and resilient strategy to prevent the ongoing shortage of health workers and the drift of young qualified health professionals to other regions. In line with the Abuja Declaration, it is expedient that Member States continue to commit to investing in health workforce, primarily by improving the quality of health education and providing benefits to ensure that the region retains its healthcare providers.

Africa is gradually becoming a fertile ground for health innovations, technology led interventions and novel research/development ideas. We applaud WHO Africa for its recent Africa Innovation Challenge, which sought to highlight and support innovators and community initiatives working on improving health outcomes in the region. We encourage Member States to be open to partnerships with other non-state actors and the private sector to promote the use of these innovations in our communities.

Thank you