

Request by Non-State Actors to Submit a Written Statement at the Virtual Session of the Seventieth Regional Committee for Africa

Non-state Actors that have registered to participate in the virtual session of the Seventieth Regional Committee for Africa and wish to make a written statement must submit a request to the Secretariat not later than two weeks before the start date of the meeting. The statements should be made available no later than one week for posting on the website.

The statement is to be delivered in written form only and should not be longer than 600 words. The statement should focus on technical issues and should be directly relevant to both the agenda item and to the document prepared for the item. The statement should not raise issues of political nature that are unrelated to the agenda item and should not contain any inappropriate or offensive reference to Member States. While there should not be reference to any individual Member States, or areas of Member States, it is recalled that nomenclature must follow that of the United Nations.

The Chair of the Regional Committee decides whether to accept the statement in light of its relevance to the discussion, the respect of the word limits and the compliance with the rules set above.

Accepted statements are posted on the website of the WHO Regional Office for Africa for a limited time period as determined by the Secretariat and will not be retained thereafter.

Name and acronym of the accredited NSA (in English, French or Portuguese):

International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)

Date and title of the meeting:

25 August 2020, 70th World Health Organisation Regional Committee for Africa

Agenda item (number, title):

DRAFT PROVISIONAL ABRIDGED AGENDA item 5, Special event on the COVID-19 response in the WHO African Region

Statement (in English, French or Portuguese):

Honourable chair,

Distinguished delegates,

IFMSA would like to thank WHO AfRO and Dr. Moeti for their leadership in this COVID-19 crisis. We believe that times of a pandemic are the most crucial opportunities for the Member States, Non-State Actors and the UN System to join each other in urgently tackling such a large-scale problem in a cohesive and impactful manner.

African countries have a large youth cohort by proportion, with 19 of the 20 youngest countries in the world belonging to the region. We would like to emphasise the importance of meaningful youth participation in the region's COVID-19 response. Already, young people have been leading and partnering with local, national and regional activities aimed at raising awareness, and are now fighting against COVID-19 on the ground. The youth of the region are not a target audience or spectators in the fight against COVID-19 but should be considered as key partners in COVID-19 response efforts in the African Region.

We call upon all stakeholders, including the Members States, their respective public health agencies, and WHO African Region to:

- Ensure meaningful and sustainable engagement with youth, young healthcare professionals, academic institutions and civil society organisations at local, national, regional and global levels;
- Ensure adequate safety protocols and support systems for healthcare workers and students in these times;
- Support the efforts of interprofessional collaboration for a systematic and holistic approach;
- Fight against stigma and misinformation by increasing the level of health literacy regarding COVID-19;

IFMSA believes that the Member States must commit to implementing legislature, policies and allocating necessary funds to support disaster risk management. We also urge the Member States to build the necessary capacity to strengthen their health care systems to cope with the current pandemic and future hazards, as well as strive for Universal Health Coverage and more resilient health systems.

To conclude, emphasise the importance of international collaboration and call upon all stakeholders in the region and outside of it to work with WHO AfRO towards a well-coordinated, high impact response. We call upon WHO to continue its valuable efforts in addressing public health emergencies of such scale and reiterate our call to meaningfully involve local community leaders, civil society networks, and youth organisations in the development and implementation of the COVID-19 response.

Thank you.

Name

Alistair Shingirai Mukondiwa

Position:

IFMSA Regional Director for Africa

Date:

11 August 2020