

## **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 6, Celebrating the certification of wild poliovirus eradication in the African Region

**Statement** (in English, French or Portuguese):

Honourable chair,  
Distinguished delegates,

IFMSA joins the African Region in celebrating the milestone of the certification of wild poliovirus eradication. We welcome this hallmark because it represents what can be achieved by inter-sectoral collaboration in vaccination and it presents an opportunity for us to reflect on how challenges such as insecurity, weak healthcare systems and poor sanitation can delay or halt the eradication of preventable infectious diseases.

As medical students today and future health professionals, applaud the steps that have been taken in fighting the disease that once paralysed over 350,000 people per year. We would also like to emphasise that the sustainability of the efforts that have been made in the global eradication of polio and the implementation of lessons that have been learnt rests on meaningful engagement of the youth.

We call upon WHO African Region, the Member States and all stakeholders to:

- Ensure the continued access to immunisation programmes for everyone, with a focus on disadvantaged groups within the Member States and refugees.
- Invest in mass education strategies on vaccination to improve population adherence to the vaccination plan and to address vaccine hesitancy, leveraging on youth presence in communities and social media
- Actively encourage research of new and improved vaccines that are accessible and affordable to everyone and encouraging innovative approaches to ensure safe coverage in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Continue making annual progress reports and reviewing existing programmatic policies and implement new ones according to potential changes in world politics, scientific advancement.
- Continue collaborating with various NGOs, CSOs with particular focus on youth-led organisations to improve vaccination coverage because the reemergence of polio is a preventable health concern of the future.

We understand and recognise the difficult decision to postpone some elements of the Polio Eradication Program due to COVID-19 because the pandemic was unexpected and its containment is a global health priority at the moment, however, we encourage continued surveillance and continued discussion on how to safely reintroduce mass polio immunisations in the region.

As the fight continues against over forms of poliovirus including the rare vaccine-derived polioviruses (VDPVs); we would like to emphasise that the presence of polio anywhere in the world, is a threat everywhere in the world.

Thank you for your attention.

**Name**

**Alistair Shingirai Mukondiwa**

**Position:**

IFMSA Regional Director for Africa

**Date:**

**11 August 2020**