

Statement submitted by the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations

This statement is supported by the International Veterinary Students' Association (special) and the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (roster).

Young people are among the biggest demographic group in the world and undebatable agents of positive change. We, as a youth, provide refreshing and innovative ideas to improve the lives of different social groups in our communities. We also share unique perspectives for proposed solutions responsive and adapted to the realities and contexts we were raised in. If empowered and given the space to implement our plans, youth play a vital role in social and economic development. An education that is accessible, acceptable, inclusive, and of quality is at the essence of bringing about the sustainable empowerment of youth. Yet, as young people, we face several barriers that hinder our meaningful participation in decision-making processes shaping our education. For example, youth are not always included in the consultation of key issues and might not be considered to have the knowledge and capacity to discuss formal policies, are treated as tokens or are not paid equally (or at all) for their participation and contributions.

Therefore we, the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation, the International Veterinary Students Association, the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Africa Trust and the African Youth and Adolescents Network, welcome the Youth Declaration on Transforming Education Summit. The declaration reaffirms the role of youth in educational systems, educational provision, and education decision-making and acknowledges educational gaps that affect young people. It is, however, the first step to meaningful youth participation, and implementing its calls will be in the hands of Member States and their local governments. We would like to use this statement to urge decision-makers to take action and align their commitments with the asks of the global youth. Therefore, we call on the governments to:

- Engage youth representing different social groups and from diverse backgrounds in decisions concerning education, listen to our concerns, experiences, and solutions, and consider us as equal partners in these discussions through consultations, inclusion in the implementation, and evaluation.
- Create spaces and settings where young people can share their perspectives on education, take them into account while designing new policies concerning education, and include skilled young people as national delegates to high-level meetings.
- Reform national education systems to equip young people with skills and knowledge that allow them to take part in their communities with a full understanding and awareness of the processes of social engagement.
- Recognize the role of continuing education and online learning opportunities as tools for narrowing educational gaps and increasing educational equity.
- Invest in youth-led activities that complement the education system and teach interpersonal, soft, and vocational skills and develop civic, social, and human rights-based values.
- Ensure an inclusive education and address the educational needs of young people in all their diversity by:

- creating safe learning environments, free from violence, bullying, discrimination, and sexual harassment by implementing efficient reporting and support systems;
 - allowing people with disabilities to participate equally by removing physical maladjustments and other barriers;
 - increasing the accessibility of schools in rural areas;
 - removing obstacles that prevent people from affording or receiving an education;
 - ensuring that girls and young people who menstruate have access to facilities where they can menstruate with dignity and with sufficient equipment, despite their economic status;
 - challenging gender norms that force girls and young women to resign from the school;
 - encouraging schools to hold open discussions with young people and provide them with a space to reflect on the curriculum;
 - creating open access online forums and tools that increase the accessibility to youth who face difficulties in the provision of education in their nations;
 - assessing the needs of education in low-income countries and refugees' camps and advocating for impactful solutions to face global educational challenges.
- Tailor the skills and knowledge that the education system provides to the changing world by providing health education, including comprehensive sexuality education, human rights education, digital learning, technology usage, climate change, critical thinking, and evidence-based practice, among others.
 - Create a learning environment and support mechanisms that ensure the mental and physical well-being of children, adolescents, and young adults by fostering self-care, entertaining physical activity, and respecting leisure time.
 - Ensure a transition from school to economic participation that is free from discrimination, does not jeopardize one's health, respects safe and decent working conditions, and generates a living wage sufficient for a healthy and sustainable life.
 - Support teachers and education providers by offering decent payment, a safe working environment, and development opportunities.

As representatives of large youth and student-led global organizations, we believe that by taking such actions, education will become more equitable, safe, sustainable, and valuable for youth, resulting in new generations of fully equipped adults and politically engaged residents and change-makers of tomorrow.