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International Federation of
Medical Students' Associations

IFMSA Policy Statement Submission Template

Sustainable Development and Health

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*“Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.
They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature”
- Principle 1 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992.*

Preamble:

We affirm our commitment to the principles outlined in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and of Agenda 21.

We acknowledge the considerable effort that has been made towards poverty eradication and development, but note the limited progress made in bringing together historically independent social, economic and environmental policy at both national and international levels.

Evidence and experience have proven that human health and sustainable development are interdependent and indivisible. Improving human health can contribute to each of the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development; as well as sustainable development itself being able to contribute to the improvement of human health. Progress thus far in sustainable development has been impeded by constrained thinking, which assumes that economic growth coupled with a focus on specific disease and discrete sectors in isolation to one another will stimulate and sustainable development.

We believe that the upcoming Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development must reaffirm that the social, economic and environmental principles underpinning sustainable development are mutually enhancing, not mutually exclusive. In particular, we are concerned that the role of health has been inadequately integrated into draft Rio+20 outcomes documents. Human health must be a central tenet of any global agreement made at Rio+20.

Additionally involvement of today's Youth in environment and development decision-making and in the implementation of programmes is critical to the long-term success of Agenda 21". Youth comprise nearly 30 percent of the world's population. Youth have the greatest at stake in our quest for sustainable development, and are those who will ensure continued progress towards it.



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Main text:

Health in the Green Economy

The IFMSA affirms:

1. That Green Economy is a sustainable means to achieving the overarching goals of global poverty eradication and improved health for all, and not an end in itself.
2. That approaches to sustainable development must address the social, economic and environmental determinants of health as a means to improve health and reduce health inequities.
3. The initiatives and strategies outlined in the World Health Organisation's "Health in the Green Economy" Series, which proposes a series of co-beneficial solutions for health and climate change mitigation and adaptation, relating to health systems, housing and household energy, and the transport sector.
4. The Declaration of the recent UN High-level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases, in particular noting that "the global burden and threat of non-communicable diseases constitutes one of the major challenges for development... undermines social and economic development... and threatens the achievement of internationally agreed development goals", and "the vicious cycle whereby non-communicable diseases and their risk factors worsen poverty, while poverty contributes to rising rates of non-communicable diseases".

The IFMSA calls for:

1. The Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development to provide a comprehensive and ambitious plan of action for the mainstreaming, enhancement and accelerated implementation of Agenda 21. Such strategies should include formalised mechanisms to ensure the co-implementation of social, economic and environmental policies and the securing of resources for development and implementation of Action Plans. This includes the need to integrate sustainable development into international aid and development assistance.
2. A "Health in All Policies" (HiAP) approach to sustainable development.
 - a. Including in policy affecting water quality, air quality, climate, food production and nutrition security;
 - b. Use of health as a simple and tangible concept to promote the benefits of sustainable development, generate significant public interest and additional political will.
3. A focus on strengthening national health care systems by:
 - i. Focusing on universal primary health care and disease prevention, in order to address the emerging epidemiological and demographic challenges in healthcare
 - ii. Incorporating environmentally sustainable practices in all aspects of health systems
4. Tackling the social determinants of health as part of sustainable development, recalling, from Agenda 21, that "efforts, involving education, housing, public works



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... are aimed at enabling people in their communities to ensure sustainable development”, the promotion of holistic and long-term sustainable urban planning based on environment-sensitive master planning that takes into account population growth, resource utilisation, building design, efficient transportation and waste management. Sustainable architecture should strive to improve living conditions, reduce vulnerability, reduce environmental impacts and diminish exposure to hazardous materials.

5. The development of green jobs, with an emphasis on young people, to address the growing youth unemployment crisis, in order to contribute to their physical, mental and social well-being. A green job should provide meaningful and decent work, a living wage, with the stewardship of environmental sustainability at the core.
6. The use of health indicators as way to monitor and evaluate progress in eradicating poverty, in the context of sustainable development, including through a strong health focus within any future road-map to replace the Millennium Development Goals
7. Prioritisation of sustainable development/green economy policies that can offer the most optimal health “co-benefits” and reduced health risks, including:
 - . Investment in the prevention of non-communicable diseases as an integral part of sustainable development. For example:
 - . Improved urban transport systems to improve air quality and traffic injury risk while encouraging physical activity
 - i. Insulation of homes, adequate indoor ventilation and clean cooking systems that reduce risks of respiratory disease as well as vulnerability to temperature and weather extremes while decreasing carbon emissions and pollution.
 - ii. Investment in clean energy technology that mitigates against the adverse impacts of climate change on health;
 - iii. Increased public health research on the relationship between health and sustainable development
8. The establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on Sustainable Development tasked with reviewing scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant to sustainable development. This body should provide a link between policymakers and sustainable development researchers, providing evidence-based guidance to inform essential stakeholders.
9. We support the restructuring of existing UN agencies, for example through the formation of a new UN organisation governed directly by member states through its own decision-making body, ensuring strong links with other UN agencies and programmes, to enable the international community to fully and effectively address all aspects of sustainable development. Public health expertise should be incorporated into any new structures formed.
10. Increase investment in development of, increase access to affordable clean technology, including through technology transfer schemes, to improve access to essential technology in low- and middle-income countries, as a essential part of facilitating sustainable development. We support the call for Clean Energy for all by 2030.



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11. The incorporation of sustainability into our global economic system, where there are stronger incentives for environmental and social benefits and long-termism is promoted.

Youth Engagement and Participation

Both as young people whose health will be affected by failure to achieve sustainable development, and as future health professionals who will be central to the delivery of health care, *we call for:*

1. Engagement of Youth organisations and, in particular, young professional organisations in sustainable development decision-making processes, including the inclusion of young people in official country delegations
2. Incorporation of sustainable development within existing professional education programs to enable future professionals to actively participate in tackling sustainable development problems and promoting solutions.
3. The development and implementation of education and training programmes, including the strengthening of national institutions and the exchange or secondment of personnel, to train experts in sustainable development; in particular, for developing countries.
4. Recognition of the great benefits of non-formal education as a means to sustainable development, and the provision of funding to empower young people to share knowledge and skills.

Additionally, we support calls for the creation of an Ombudsman for Future Generations, and believe that this should:

1. Incorporate the above four calls relating to Youth.
2. Be created by the year 2015.
3. Have the formal right to address any United Nations body or assembly on matters that will have an impact upon Future Generations.
4. Focus on ensuring future generations can expect at least the same, if not higher standards of living and health than we do today.

The IFMSA as a Federation commits to:

1. Facilitating the engagement of future health professionals in international processes addressing sustainable development including, but not limited to, the Rio+20 summit.
2. Upholding sustainability as one the main principles in our operation



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3. Working to achieve a generation of responsible doctors that work towards and within a sustainable health care system, through:
 - a. Enhancing the awareness of climate change and sustainability within our organisation
 - b. Promoting the integration of issues surrounding sustainability into medical curricula
4. Raising awareness and facilitating campaign action on health in sustainable development through events and campaigns.
5. Collaborate with other health and youth organisations in promoting a sustainable development agenda.

References

1. Rio +20 Zero Draft - <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=12&nr=324&menu=23>
2. Agenda 21, The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development - <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>
3. WHO Health in the Green Economy Series - http://www.who.int/hia/green_economy/en/index.html
4. Rioplus Twenties, First reading of the zero draft - <http://rioplustwenties.org/?p=1036>
5. IFMSA submission to the Zero Draft - <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&nr=182&type=510&menu=20&template=529&str=Youth>