



The Keynote Speech

“The power of young generation to achieve SDGs through Health in All Policies”

by

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Today, I have three goals in mind, I want to remind you about a threat, to give you a hope, and to encourage you for an opportunity of change.

In our fast-developing world, numbers speak louder than words, and there are three numbers that I want you to keep in mind today: 3.5 BILLION, 1.8 BILLION, 4039

- 3.5 Billion people still don't have access to essential healthcare services: A threat that we must concur.
- 1.8 Billion people are considered youth living now on earth: A hope we must utilize.
- 4039 days are left until our deadline, the year 2030: An opportunity for change

Good afternoon everyone, My name is Batool Wahdani, I'm the president of the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations, and I'm proudly representing the voices of 1.3 million medical students from 125 countries around the globe, who, just as many other youth groups, are a living example of the hope I told you about.

SDGs, three simple letters that stand for the Sustainable Development Goals, which no one in the room fails to recognize. 17 Goals, 169 targets, and to us, the ones present here: the health workforce, advocates and decision makers, one particular outcome that we all care about is good health and wellbeing for all. But how come SDG3 is an outcome?

Poor populations face the most issues in accessing healthcare (SDG1), malnutrition has severe health impacts (SDG2), we need to support high quality education to improve health and health equity (SDG4), we should prevent diseases through safe water and sanitation for all (SDG6), and we must protect health from the climate risks (SDG13). I can go on and on, sharing how every SDG relates to health, and simply we cannot reach health and wellbeing for all without having it as a lens while working on all other SDGs through health in all policies approach.

Yet, the most important question is, how can we build the capacity of the younger generation to address the challenges their communities face, by working on the SDGs with a health in all policies approach?

In March 2018, we have asked a sample of medical students from 80 countries a very simple question: Have you been taught about Universal Health Coverage in your medical schools? 65.5% answered, no. UHC, our main agenda worldwide in health, is not being taught to our future healthcare professionals. We asked them another question as well, are you planning to stay in your country after you graduate, and only 16% answered yes, is 16% enough to secure the healthcare needs of the local society? Or do we have access of healthcare providers?

As healthcare providers by training, such as many present in this room, we feel a moral obligation towards our communities and towards our patients. But being a good provider doesn't begin automatically when you're enrolled in the labor market, it has to start with the roots of education, with ensuring that social accountability is reflected in all types of curricula. We need to address the skill mismatch in the training of the health workforce. Our students should be taught about the SDGs, Universal Health Coverage, Primary Health Care, Health Equity and Human Rights. They should be empowered to think global and act local!

Yet, I'm not here to only share with you the issues the younger generation faces, but rather to prove to you that they are a smart investment for your future, our future.

The world is witnessing today the largest number of young people ever, 1.8 billion whom 90% of are living in developing countries. Every day, we hear great inspiring stories of young people who created revolutions, came up with inventions and creative solutions, and led change in their own communities. Youth, as one of the biggest demographics on earth, should undoubtedly be positive agents of change in the world. We are the backbone of the future, leaders both of today and tomorrow. In various opportunities afforded to us, we have and will continue to offer innovative ideas reflecting the needs and concerns of future generations, which requires that we should be entitled to participate in the decisions that affect us.

Allow me to share with you a humble example from the organization I come from: It all started in 1951, when we, medical students envisioned a world in which we unite for global health and are equipped with the resources, skills and knowledge to take on health leadership roles locally and globally. What we came up with was a medium. A place for students to gather, exchange knowledge, and build their capacity. One big family that is also the oldest and the largest student run organization in the world; The IFMSA.

To assure the biggest possible impact from our efforts, we have decided to focus our work fourteen global priorities, for our passionate and youthful voices to really be heard. These range from Universal Health Coverage, Migrants health and Rights, Sexual and reproductive health including HIV/AIDs, Non-communicable diseases, Social Accountability, to Meaningful youth participation and much more! We have developed policy documents related to these areas and led advocacy campaigns in international events and platforms to stand up for our beliefs. Not only that, we have also established more than 22 specialized trainings in different fields. We have been carrying these trainings in all the continents of the world and we are currently are running 17 specialized programs that address global problems that we face nowadays. We have 135 local chapters, and I'm proud to say that one of our most active members is IFMSA Thailand, representing medical students in this great country!

This is one of various examples of how youth have managed to gather their voices and efforts on local level, and lead change up to regional and international levels!

And I stand here today, as an individual, one person out of 1.8 billion young people in the world, who are full of energy, determination, hope, creativity and strong sense of accountability and leadership. I present to you a winning case, a solution to all of our issues, and a guarantee for a better 2030.

Before I leave you, I want you to always remember our three important numbers, 3.5 billion people still cannot access essential health care services, but we are blessed with 1.8 billion young people worldwide who are more than capable to lead change at all levels, so let's make the remaining 4039 days until 2030, our deadline, an opportunity for change.

Thank you and I wish you a successful assembly