WFSA, which represents hundreds of thousands of anaesthesiologists in over 140 countries around the world, gives unequivocal support to the resolution on strengthening the provision of safe anaesthesia and essential surgery as a component of universal health coverage. This concept has been a fundamental part of our ‘raison d’etre’ since our inception in 1955. The recent publications of DCP3-Essential Surgery and the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery have provided further data and direct focus on the unmet needs of the 5 billion people on this planet who do not have access to safe, affordable surgical and anaesthesia care when needed.

With these carefully researched data sets now in the public domain there is a need to provide a framework upon which those in LMICs can start to build a cost effective and realistic progression to achieve improvements in patient care. As an organisation that has set the International Standards for a Safe Provision of Anaesthesia and which delivers the guidance, education and training to meet those standards, WFSA believes that we have many elements of this process already in existence. These now need scaling up around the world to produce tangible results in a short time scale. We can address the combined elements of workforce, drugs, equipment and infrastructure that not only ensure a safe provision of anaesthesia, but contribute to strengthening health systems and improving health outcomes in a manner that is affordable, life-saving and an outstanding return on investment.

Whilst we urge all countries present to endorse the tabled resolution, we seek to see tangible and appropriate action as soon as possible. WFSA remains ready to work with WHO and Ministers of Health around the world, together with our counterpart international surgical organisations, to improve patient care and access to safe anaesthesia in a truly dramatic fashion.