WHA 70 WFSA STATEMENT: Agenda Item 13.1 Human resources for health and implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations’ High-Level Commission on Health Employment and Economic Growth

The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA), commends the UN High-Level Commission’s Action Plan. The WFSA represents hundreds of thousands of anaesthesiologists in 140 countries. We are working with member societies to achieve universal access to safe anaesthesia, directly contributing to SDG 3 and Universal Health Coverage by 2030.

There cannot be Universal Health Coverage without a scale up of surgical services worldwide. The provision of surgical care has been neglected over many years and it is estimated that, each year, more than four times as many people die from surgical conditions than HIV, tuberculosis and malaria combined. An increasing number of studies have highlighted the cost-effectiveness of surgical treatment.

Safe surgery depends on safe anaesthesia. Anaesthesia is complex and potentially hazardous, and optimal patient care depends on anaesthesia being provided, led or overseen by an anaesthesiologist.

The WFSA wishes to highlight the Commission’s recommendation calling on Member States to “scale up transformative, high-quality education and lifelong learning so that all health workers have skills that match the health needs of populations”.

The WFSA has been involved in the development of a range of high-quality educational projects, including training programs on 5 continents, and ongoing educational support for anaesthesia providers.

We have also been working to ensure that programmes match the health needs of populations through the development of an anaesthesia capacity assessment tool, and a workforce survey covering over 97% of the world’s population. The survey has revealed massive disparities in the anaesthesia provider workforce worldwide with particularly low densities in sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia. This survey will be an important tool for workforce planning.

We call on Member States to continue their support for human resources for health and to seek adequate funding for transformative education and appropriate numbers of surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia providers.

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