

## WHO World Health Assembly 74 (WHA74)

### Item 16. Committing to implementation of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030)

(Document [A74/14](#))

On behalf of FDI World Dental Federation, representing over 1 million dentists, and the International Association for Dental Research, representing over 10,000 researchers, supported by Smile Train and NCD Alliance, we thank WHO for the comprehensive DG's report on Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (WCAH).

We are concerned about the limited progress made on resolution [WHA63.17](#) (birth defects). In 10 years, the main overall output reported is the needed guidance on standardized surveillance for birth defects, which includes orofacial clefts as major congenital anomalies. This is of paramount importance given that orofacial clefts affect 1 in 500-700 births and should be considered as severe congenital anomalies. In large parts of rural India, China, Indonesia, and Sub-Saharan Africa, only a small percentage of infants born with orofacial clefts survive the first weeks of life.

We are also concerned that neonatal deaths due to preterm birth complications and congenital anomalies have increased. Evidence shows that risk factors such as tobacco and alcohol use and deficit of folic acid, vitamin B6/B12, and zinc during pregnancy can contribute to the development of orofacial clefts. Pregnant women are also at risk of developing hypertension and diabetes, and experience hormonal changes that can increase risk for periodontal (gum) disease. We urge Member States to include NCD primary prevention interventions in antenatal care to raise risk-factor awareness and increase oral health literacy among pregnant women.

We welcome the focus on breastfeeding, and ask Member States to strengthen legislation on breast-milk substitutes containing free sugars to reduce the risk of developing early childhood caries and other NCDs, which often start developing before children attend school. Thus, we urge Member States to implement pre-school interventions through WCAH programmes that promote oral health and include basic oral healthcare.

**Word count: 288**