**IAPO Intervention on Universal Health Coverage (item 4a),
61st Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean**

Thank you Chair,
Honourable members, distinguished delegates.

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO) is an alliance of patient groups representing the interests of patients worldwide. We have almost 250 member organizations based in more than 65 countries covering 60 different conditions, and representing an estimated 365 million patients.

IAPO welcomes the progress reported by the Regional Committee toward universal health coverage in the Eastern Mediterranean region. We commend the political commitment of Member States to universal health coverage however more needs to be done to follow-through on this commitment. We know from IAPO member patients' organizations that many experience a lack of commitment and inadequate funding for universal health coverage in their home countries. Members report that healthcare is often unaffordable for patients and their families and there are disparities in access to healthcare.

IAPO is working with its members and partners to develop principles of universal health coverage from a patient perspective. We believe these principles need to be at the centre of health systems and we call on all governments and delegates to consider these principles and their importance in ensuring affordable, high quality and equitable access for all patients.

The principles governing universal access to health coverage are based on:
1. **Accessibility**
2. **Patient-centredness and equity**
3. **Choice and empowerment**
4. **Quality**
5. **Partnership and collaboration**
6. **Sustainability and value**
7. **Accountability and transparency**

We ask delegates to remember as you move forward in developing and delivering on universal health coverage goals and plans, that all policies, programs, and strategies must be based on the fundamental right to patient-centred healthcare as outlined in IAPO's Declaration on Patient-Centred Healthcare.

Thank you for your attention.