One Voice statement on EB 146 Agenda 19 (Accelerating efforts on food safety)

Chair,

This joint statement is presented on behalf of SEAR countries.

1) Food safety is key to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, although without specific SDG targets. There is no food security without food safety. Unhealthy diets, unsafe food and malnutrition in all forms account for about one third of all deaths globally. This has a substantial economic impact, costing Low- and Middle-Income Countries in Asia over US 63.1 billion in 2016. Our Region is an important player in international food and agricultural trade as a major global supplier of many food commodities. However, rejections of food products dispatched from exporting countries at the port of entry, particularly in industrialized countries, remain significant.

2) The Meeting of National Food Safety Authorities in Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region have finalized and endorsed ‘Framework for Action on Food Safety in WHO South-East Asia Region’ in 2019 considering recent international development on food safety and regional specific situation.

3) The globalized nature of modern food chains, alongside emerging issues such as antimicrobial resistance and effects of climate change, impact food safety due to food fraud practices through deliberate illegal substitution, mislabeling, counterfeiting and adulteration of food products need attention.

4) Given the lack of adequate expertise and appropriate technology for science based risk assessment, import inspection and testing capacities as well as resources to ensure the safety and quality of imported food supplies and food produced for domestic consumption, we seek guidance and support from WHO Governing bodies to mobilize greater international coordination and support for scaling up national and regional efforts, and engaging Member States at the highest political level for food safety.

5) WHO’s potential is immense for strengthening capacities at the country level and together with FAO help establish and promote Codex standards, and in assist Member States to develop and implement food safety policies, and to build a network of relevant stakeholders in the field of food safety;

I Thank You Chair