Hon'ble Chair,

Bhutan aligns with the statement delivered by Thailand on behalf SEAR member states.

Bhutan welcomes the resolution on 'Social Determinants of Health' in line with the WHO's constitutional mandate of promoting a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. We note that tackling health inequities and inequalities within and among countries is essential to uphold this mandate.

There has never been a more appropriate time to adopt a resolution under this agenda item- in a world where the social determinants of health have considerable effects on COVID-19 outcomes. The pandemic has undoubtedly brought about broad disparities in our society into focus and exposed the health effects of social inequities.

In Bhutan, the provision of free basic public health services is one of the ways through which we try to address the inequities and inequalities in accessing health care. Bhutan's National Health Policy, guided by the principles of Gross National Happiness, is based on the premise that social, spiritual, cultural and environmental context is essential to realize our aspiration of providing inclusive health care. However, the impacts of the pandemic has disproportionately affected our people based on factors such as nature of work and income level. Although, we have been successful to avoid a full blown public health crises until now, there is a lot to do in terms of addressing the social determinants of health that affects COVID-19 outcomes and also as a preparatory measure for future public health emergencies.

The operational framework recommended to be developed by WHO to assess and address the social determinants of health and health inequities, as well as their impact on health outcomes is strategic and we urge WHO to adopt a comprehensive approach to inform social policies, economic arrangements, and political action.

Chair, Bhutan remains committed to address the social, economic and environment determinants of health to reduce health inequities, as one of the means to recover from the ongoing pandemic and to be better prepared for future pandemics. Therefore, we would like to express our full support for the proposed resolution.

Thank you!