



## PENANG DECLARATION

21 September 2019

The Wembley, A St Giles Hotel, Penang, Malaysia

Good oral health is of vital importance for general health attainment and is integral in enabling one to eat, speak, socialise, and to enjoy good quality of life. While most oral diseases are largely preventable, substantial inequalities continue to exist with regards to population oral health status. Many people across Asia persist to suffer from discomfort, pain and disabilities associated with these diseases. Therefore, effective oral health promotion strategies and oral disease preventive measures are critical to improve overall health and reduce the burden of healthcare costs.

Recognising the limitations of health education initiatives and clinical interventions, efforts to improve population oral health status must in tandem address physical and social determinants of health at various levels and involving numerous actors. Oral health promotion strategies must tackle issues beyond healthcare and individual risk factors, such as relevant public policies, physical environments and availability of resources to access educational, economic, and job opportunities. Communities, organisations, health and education services, and individuals and their families must work together synergistically to improve oral health and reduce the need and demand for dental services.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Include oral health messages into any school activities involving promotion of general health and healthy lifestyle for children.
2. Use various technologies to communicate good oral health practices to parents and children.
3. Evaluate oral health promotion strategies for children and disseminate findings to foster best practices approach.
4. Advocate for safe and healthy child living environment and strong social parental network, so that parents are empowered to supervise good oral practices for their children.
5. Advocate for school settings and policies that support oral health.
6. Make evidence-based use of fluoride among school children available and affordable.
7. Review the appropriateness of oral health indicators that are used as part of monitoring systems for school children.