Statement of interest to become a board member representing the Eastern Mediterranean region

I am writing to express my interest in reapplying for the position of Board Member representing the Eastern Mediterranean region (EMR). This opportunity aligns with my dedication to shaping health systems agendas, influencing policies and practices, and advocating for better health outcomes at the national, regional and global levels.

With several years of experience in health policy and systems research (HPSR), I recognize the critical role of HPSR in promoting stronger, resilient, people-centered health systems and the severe consequences of poorly informed decisions on human lives and health inequities. Living and working in the EMR, where health systems are frequently challenged by political instability, conflicts and unexpected healthcare demands, re-enforces the urgent need for HPSR and evidence-informed policymaking. Despite this, HPSR remains underappreciated, underfunded, and underutilized in making crucial health system decisions regarding service delivery, financing, and organization.

In my roles as an instructor of Public Health Practice, Chief Scientific Officer at the Knowledge to Policy (K2P) Center—a WHO collaborating center for evidence-informed policymaking and practice—and co-founder of the Center for Systematic Review on Health Policy and Systems Research (SPARK) at the American University of Beirut, I have focused on bridging the gap between research, policy, and practice by making research evidence accessible, building capacity for evidence-informed policymaking, and advocating for policy changes. These experiences have also honed my skills in shaping strategic directions, collaborating with diverse stakeholders and mentoring teams. These skills will be transferred in my role as HSG board member.

As a current board member, I have co-chaired HSG's Capacity Strengthening Working Group, contributing to the publication of HSG's framework for systemic capacity strengthening. I am also co-leading the development and operationalization of HSG's HPSR individual training/mentoring program. Additionally, I have played a key role in revising and reviewing the call for and the abstracts submitted to the Capacity strengthening sessions for HSR2024. I am also a member of the governance committee where I have contributed to revising HSG strategic documents and developing a board capacity assessment survey as part of efforts to ensure the HSG society and its board remain responsive to changing and evolving needs. At the EMR level, and in my capacity at the K2P Center which represents HSG's EMR Regional seat, I have co-organized several HPSR events, notably the 25th anniversary of the WHO Alliance for HPSR in Beirut, focusing on evidence generation and use for institution-building, capacity strengthening, and future opportunities for HPSR. Furthermore, through my contributions to a series of publications on HPSR funding in the EMR, I aim to initiate national and regional dialogues on the need to improve funding landscape for HPSR in the region. I have also hosted webinars in collaboration with different partner including WHO EMRO to raise awareness about HSG and the Global Symposium on Health Systems Research (HSR2024). I have also initiated discussions with regional colleagues to host a virtual pre-conference for HSR2024 in the region for the region.

Rejoining the Board will allow me to further promote HPSR and evidence-informed policymaking in the EMR while ensuring continuity of my ongoing work and commitments within the HSG Society. It will also enable me to continue engaging young researchers and emerging champions, building the critical mass needed to strengthen health systems in the region. I aim to increase regional participation in global HPSR events and facilitate the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and capacity within the EMR and beyond, ultimately enhancing global health systems and outcomes.

I am committed to HSG's key values and look forward to the opportunity to continue contributing to the Society's growth and impact as a board member.