

# IFDH Applauds UN Declaration: Oral Health Recognized in the Global NCD Agenda

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The International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH) welcomes the United Nations General Assembly's adoption of the Political Declaration of the Fourth High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and the Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being. The Declaration, adopted in December 2025, explicitly recognizes oral diseases as a major global health and economic burden and commits to integrating oral health into primary health care and universal health coverage.

This recognition marks an important milestone for global oral health. The Declaration acknowledges that 3.7 billion people worldwide are affected by oral diseases, while reaffirming that the vast majority of these conditions are preventable through evidence-based, cost-effective interventions delivered across the life course.

## **Effective Prevention Depends on Having a Qualified Workforce**

IFDH strongly emphasizes that the success of this Declaration depends on the effective mobilization of oral health professionals who are specifically educated, trained, and experienced in prevention: dental hygienists, dental therapists, oral therapists, and oral health therapists.

These professionals play a critical role in health promotion, disease prevention, early detection, behaviour change, and community-based care. Globally, they are already delivering prevention across schools, communities, long-term care settings, primary care clinics, and public health systems. Their competencies align directly with the Declaration's call to address oral health conditions through prevention, early detection, and integrated primary care services.

*"Recognition alone is not enough. Implementation is where impact happens."* said Jill Rethman, RDH, BA, President of the International Federation of Dental Hygienists (IFDH). *"Dental hygienists, dental therapists, oral therapists, and oral health therapists are prevention professionals by education, scope, and experience. We have the capability to deliver measurable change at population level, and we are ready to support countries in translating this commitment into action."*

## IFDH is Ready to Support Implementation

IFDH brings existing global infrastructure, expertise, and programs that directly support the goals of the UN Declaration:

- **Social Responsibility Program**

Promotes expanding equitable access to preventive oral health services and strengthening public awareness that oral disease is preventable.

- **Policy, Knowledge and Leadership**

White Papers and advocacy initiatives that translate evidence into practical guidance for health systems and decision-makers.

- **Scientific and Professional Education**

Global knowledge exchange supported by International Symposia, virtual Global Oral Health Summits, and the *International Journal of Dental Hygiene*.

## A Call for Partnership and Collaboration

IFDH believes that meaningful progress requires collaboration. In this spirit, IFDH extends its hand to governments, United Nations agencies, professional organizations, academic institutions, civil society, and oral healthcare organizations worldwide, inviting them to collaborate in support of this Declaration.

By partnering across sectors and professions, and by fully integrating the oral health workforce into NCD strategies and primary health care systems, this global commitment can lead to real improvements in health, equity, and quality of life.

*“This Declaration provides a strong mandate,” added Rethman. “IFDH stands ready to collaborate, advise, and contribute our global expertise to ensure that prevention becomes the cornerstone of oral health within the broader NCD agenda.”*

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## About IFDH

The International Federation of Dental Hygienists is an international non-profit association uniting national organizations of Dental Hygienists, Dental Therapists, Oral Therapists and Oral Health Therapists.

By fostering leadership and collaboration, IFDH is the principal advocate for the oral hygiene profession globally and promotes excellence in oral health, education, research and practice. IFDH is dedicated to enhancing the recognition of the Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist, Oral Therapist and Oral Health Therapist as being the key provider of preventive oral health care worldwide and ensuring that oral health is integrated as a key aspect of our patients' overall health

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