

Preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage

The Seventy-second World Health Assembly,

Having considered the Director-General's report on preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage;¹

Recalling the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which recognizes that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition;

Recalling also United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015) entitled "Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," by which Member States adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative sustainable development goals and targets that are integrated and indivisible; and recognizing that achieving universal health coverage will greatly contribute to ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages;

Recognizing that health is a precondition for and an outcome and indicator of all three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development;

Acknowledging that the Sustainable Development Goals are aimed at realizing the human rights of all, leaving no one behind and reaching those farthest behind first by, inter alia, achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls;

Recognizing that through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, Heads of State and Government made a bold commitment to achieve universal health coverage by 2030, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all;

Recognizing also that Heads of State and Government committed themselves to ensuring, by 2030, universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes;

¹ Document A72/14.

Recalling resolution WHA69.11 (2016) on health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which recognizes that universal health coverage implies that all people have access, without discrimination, to nationally determined sets of the needed promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative essential health services, and essential, safe, affordable, effective, and quality medicines and vaccines, while ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the users to financial hardship, with a special emphasis on the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized segments of the population;

Recalling also United Nations General Assembly resolution 67/81 of 12 December 2012, entitled “Global health and foreign policy,” which urges governments, civil society organizations and international organizations to collaborate and to promote the inclusion of universal health coverage as an important element on the international development agenda, and a means of promoting sustained, inclusive and equitable growth, social cohesion and the well-being of the population, as well as achieving other milestones for social development;

Recognizing the responsibility of governments to urgently and significantly scale up efforts to accelerate the transition towards universal access to affordable and quality health care services, and reaffirming the primary responsibility of Member States to determine and promote their own paths towards achieving universal health coverage;

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/313 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, adopted on 27 July 2015, which reaffirmed the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and create an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity, and which encouraged countries to consider setting nationally appropriate spending targets for quality investments in health and better alignment of global health initiatives’ programmes to national systems;

Recalling also United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/139 of 12 December 2017, entitled “Global health and foreign policy: addressing the health of the most vulnerable for an inclusive society”, in which Member States decided to hold a high-level meeting of the General Assembly in 2019 on universal health coverage;

Recalling further the United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/138 of 12 December 2017, entitled “International Universal Health Coverage Day”, in which the General Assembly decided to proclaim 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day;

Reaffirming WHO Member States’ commitment in resolution WHA71.1 (2018) on the Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 to support the work towards achieving the vision of the “triple billion” goals, including one billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage, one billion more people better protected from health emergencies, as well as further contributing to one billion more people enjoying better health and well-being;

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 73/2 of 10 October 2018 on the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, which committed to promote increased access to affordable, safe, effective and quality medicines and diagnostics and other technologies, reaffirming the World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement), as amended, and also reaffirming the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health (2001), which recognizes that intellectual property rights should be interpreted and implemented in a manner

supportive of the right of Member States to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all, and which notes the need for appropriate incentives in the development of new health products;

Reiterating that health research and development should be needs-driven, evidence-based, guided by the core principles of affordability, effectiveness, efficiency and equity and considered a shared responsibility;

Recalling all previous Health Assembly resolutions aimed at promoting physical and mental health and well-being, as well as contributing to the achievement of universal health coverage;

Noting with great concern that the current slow progress in achieving universal health coverage means that many countries are not on track to achieve target 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals on achieving universal health coverage;

Noting also that health is a major driver of economic growth;

Noting further that current government spending on and available resources for health, particularly in many low- and middle-income countries, are not adequate for achieving universal health coverage, including financial risk protection of the population;

Acknowledging the important role and necessary contribution of nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations, and academic institutions, as appropriate, to the achievement of national objectives for universal health coverage, and the need in this regard for synergy and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders;

Recognizing the role of parliamentarians in advancing the universal health coverage agenda;

Noting that investment is essential for strong, transparent, accountable, and effective health service delivery systems, including an adequately distributed, skilled, motivated, and fit-for-purpose health workforce;

Recognizing that effective and financially sustainable implementation of universal health coverage is based on a resilient and responsive health system with capacities for broad public health measures, disease prevention, health protection, health promotion, and addressing of determinants of health through policies across sectors, including promotion of the health literacy of the population;

Noting that the increasing number of complex emergencies is hindering the achievement of universal health coverage, and that coherent and inclusive approaches to safeguard universal health coverage in emergencies are essential, including through international cooperation, ensuring the continuum and provision of essential health services and public health functions, in line with humanitarian principles;

Recognizing the fundamental role of primary health care in achieving universal health coverage and other health-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets, as envisioned in the Declaration of Astana from the Global Conference on Primary Health Care (Astana, Kazakhstan, 25 and 26 October 2018), and in providing equitable access to a comprehensive range of services and care that are people-centred, gender-sensitive, high quality, safe, integrated, accessible, available and affordable, and that contribute to the health and well-being of all;

Recognizing also that patient safety, strengthening health systems, and access to quality promotive, preventive, curative, as well as rehabilitation, services, together with palliative care, are essential to achieving universal health coverage,

1. URGES Member States:¹

- (1) to accelerate progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal target 3.8 on universal health coverage by 2030, leaving no one behind, especially the poor, the vulnerable and marginalized populations;
- (2) to support the preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 2019 on universal health coverage, participating at the highest possible level, preferably at the level of Head of State and Government, and to engage in the development of the action-oriented, consensus-based political declaration;
- (3) to continue to mobilize adequate and sustainable resources for universal health coverage, as well as ensuring efficient, equitable and transparent resource allocation through good governance of health systems; and to ensure collaboration across sectors, as appropriate, with a special focus on reducing health inequities and inequalities;
- (4) to support better prioritization and decision-making, notably by strengthening institutional capacities and governance on health intervention and technology assessment, in order to achieve efficiencies and evidence-based decisions, while respecting patient privacy and promoting data security; and to encourage the greater and systematic utilization of new technologies and approaches, including digital technologies and integrated health information systems as a means of promoting equitable, affordable, and universal access to health and to inform policy decisions in support of universal health coverage;
- (5) to continue investing in and strengthening primary health care as a cornerstone of a sustainable health system, to achieve universal health coverage and other health-related Sustainable Development Goals, with a view to providing a comprehensive range of services and care that are people-centred, of high quality, safe, integrated, accessible, available and affordable, as well as providing public health functions as envisioned in the Declaration of Astana from the Global Conference on Primary Health Care (Astana, Kazakhstan, 25 and 26 October 2018) and implementing the commitments of that Declaration;
- (6) to continue investing in and strengthening gender-sensitive health care services that address gender-related barriers to health and secure women and girls' equitable access to health, in order to realize the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health for all and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- (7) to invest in an adequate, competent and committed health workforce and promote the recruitment, development, training, and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States, by active implementation of the Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030;

¹ And, where applicable, economic integration organizations.

(8) to promote access to affordable, safe, effective, and quality medicines, vaccines, diagnostics, and other technologies;

(9) to support research and development on medicines and vaccines for communicable and noncommunicable diseases, including neglected tropical diseases, particularly those that primarily affect developing countries;

(10) to consider integrating, as appropriate, safe and evidence-based traditional and complementary medicine services within national and/or subnational health systems, particularly at the level of primary health care, according to national context and priorities;

(11) to promote more coherent and inclusive approaches to safeguard universal health coverage in emergencies, including through international cooperation, ensuring the continuum and provision of essential health services and public health functions, in line with humanitarian principles;

(12) to promote health literacy in the population, especially among vulnerable groups, in order to strengthen patient involvement in clinical decision-making with a focus on health professional–patient communication, and to further invest in easily accessible, accurate, understandable, and evidence-based health information, including through the Internet;

(13) to continue to strengthen prevention and health promotion by addressing the determinants of health and health equity through multisectoral approaches involving the whole of government and the whole of society, as well as the private sector;

(14) to strengthen monitoring and evaluation platforms to support regular tracking of the progress made in improving equitable access to a comprehensive range of services and care within the health system and to financial risk protection and make best use of such platforms for policy decisions;

(15) to make the best use of the annual International Universal Health Coverage Day, including by considering appropriate activities, in accordance with national needs and priorities;

2. CALLS UPON all development cooperation partners and stakeholders from the health sector and beyond to harmonize, synergize, and enhance their support to countries' objectives in achieving universal health coverage, and to encourage the engagement of such partners and stakeholders in, as appropriate, the development of the global action plan for healthy lives and well-being for all in order to accelerate the progress on Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote health and well-being for all at all ages) and other health-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets in order to achieve the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to fully support Member States' efforts, in collaboration with the broader United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030, in particular with regard to health systems' strengthening, including by strengthening WHO's normative work and the Organization's capacity to provide technical support and policy advice to Member States;

- (2) to work closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union to raise further awareness among parliamentarians about universal health coverage and fully engage them both in advocacy and for sustained political support towards achieving universal health coverage by 2030;
- (3) to facilitate and support the learning from, and sharing of, universal health coverage experiences, best practices and challenges across WHO Member States, including by engaging relevant non-State actors, as appropriate, as well as initiatives such as the International Health Partnership for Universal Health Coverage 2030, and in support of the preparatory process and the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage;
- (4) to produce a report on universal health coverage as a technical input to facilitate informed discussions at the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage;
- (5) to make the best use of International Universal Health Coverage Day to drive the universal health coverage agenda, including by encouraging increased political commitment to universal health coverage;
- (6) to submit biennial reports on progress made in implementing this resolution, starting with the Seventy-third World Health Assembly in 2020 and ending with the Eighty-third World Health Assembly in 2030, as part of existing reporting on resolution WHA69.11 (2016).

Sixth plenary meeting, 24 May 2019
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