

Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, WHA76

Intervention - plenary - item 3

Excellencies, Honourable chair

It is it my great pleasure to be with you as Commonwealth Secretary-General.

The COVID-19 pandemic united us all in grief and uncertainty, but also in resolve, to rise together in shared commitment to protect our brothers and sisters.

The pandemic taught us that investing in health for all is not optional - it is essential. And Universal Health Coverage is unequivocally the best way to deliver this.

The Commonwealth's commitment to UHC flows from our Charter - the highest expression of our ideals and aspirations - which commits to ensuring equitable access to affordable healthcare. An aspiration which received the unanimous endorsement by 56 Heads of Governments when we met in Kigali last year. This Assembly, represent golden opportunities:

To initiate a whole-of-government approach to public health, Finance Ministers, Climate Ministers, Education Ministers must ensure bold deliverable actions with you, our dear Health Ministers

To energise the Primary Health Care gains which could save 60 million lives by 2030 and help us to achieve the SDGs

To build resilience against exogenous shocks to our health systems, through the increasing emergency of climate change, especially for our Small and Vulnerable States

To unlock the power of data and digital health.

And to empower the magnificent global health workforce to better protect, support and care for our populations

Our meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers held this weekend in Geneva was a shining example of that urgency and unity.

And through our partnership with my dear brother, Dr Tedros, and his team at the WHO, the Commonwealth is closer than ever to realising our health goals.

But we all still have so much to do, and the time for talking is over. None of us can do this alone. We **must** have concrete action, we must seize the moment, to work together to shape a Commonwealth, and a world, which is healthier, happier, safer, more equitable and more resilient.

Our brothers and sisters are depending on us, and we are literally running out of time

Thank you.