

WHO EB 152
Agenda item 5. Universal Health Coverage

NB8 Draft statement

Thank you Chair,

I'm speaking on the behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries [add list]

We wish to express our strong appreciation of WHO's continued commitment to enhance universal health coverage and particularly reorienting health systems to build on a strong primary health care as a resilient foundation for the fulfillment of the Right to Health for all.

Universal health coverage means equal access to quality essential health services, as well as, access to safe, effective and affordable pharmaceuticals and vaccines while ensuring that there will not be an overwhelming economic burden on the individual.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are an integral part of quality primary health services. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes, is fundamental for universal health coverage.

Three matters are often overlooked in universal health coverage. First, prevention of catastrophic health expenditure requires a system of social protection. Second, no country can afford UHC if nationally defined essential public health functions to monitor and protect the health of citizens and to prevent diseases are not in place. Third, many essential public health functions are most cost-effectively organized at health system or national level.

Achievement of human-centered universal health coverage will require political leadership that prioritizes fiscal space for health, improved financial management, accountability, transparency, regular monitoring and evaluation. It requires strengthening of national plans that are based on comprehensive public social and health services and a qualified health workforce, as well as, adequate and sustainable national funding to ensure that no one is left behind. Furthermore, comprehensive primary health services in communities are essential in the provision of first level services. UHC is not only a long-term investment in wellbeing of citizens, but also the foundation of emergency prevention, preparedness and response.

We call on global health initiatives to support countries on their path to UHC. The ambitions of the GAP SDGs must be realized. Global health initiatives must build on their comparative advantages and complement national processes. UHC must remain the primary responsibility of domestic authorities, with a commitment to sustainable domestic spending for health. At the same time, the coordination of international financing for UHC should be enhanced with stronger mutual accountability towards universal health coverage at country level.

Universal health coverage should remain a top priority within the General Program of Work until 2025 and beyond. We look forward to utilizing this year's high-level meeting on UHC to ensure that UHC remains high on the global political agenda.

Thank you