

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

The Executive Board, having considered the report by the Director-General,¹

Decided to recommend to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report by the Director-General,

Reaffirming the right of every human being, without distinction of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health;

Recalling United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015) on transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, resolutions WHA72.4 (2019) on preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage and WHA72.2 (2019) on primary health care, United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/2 (2019) on the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, and United Nations General Assembly resolution 75/315 (2021) on scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage;

Recognizing that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the need to achieve universal health coverage and access to quality health care, and further recognizing that vital contribution of universal health coverage is fundamental for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals related not only to health and well-being, but also to other socioeconomic development and recognizing that achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is critical for the attainment of healthy lives and well-being for all, with a focus on health outcomes throughout the life course;

Recognizing also that health system resilience and universal health coverage are central for effective and sustainable preparedness, prevention and response to pandemics and other public health emergencies;

Recognizing further that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges 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 Alma-Ata

¹ Document EB152/5.

Declaration and the Declaration of Astana from the Global Conference on Primary Health Care, and that primary health care and health services should be high quality, safe, comprehensive, integrated, accessible, available and affordable for everyone and everywhere, and provided with compassion, respect and dignity by health professionals who are well-trained, skilled, motivated and committed;

Also recognizing the need for health systems that are strong, resilient, functional, well governed, responsive, accountable, integrated, community-based, person-centred with enhanced patient safety, and capable of quality service delivery supported by a sufficiently funded and accessible competent health workforce, adequate health infrastructure and enabling legislative and regulatory frameworks that support equitable access to responsive and quality health services;

Further recognizing that communities, local administrations and organizations are central to achieving universal health coverage and support efforts to provide community-based health services, improve access to quality health services and care for hard-to-reach communities, including in humanitarian contexts;

Expressing concern at the global shortfall of 15 million in the health workforce in 2020, primarily in low- and middle-income countries, and recognizing the need to attract, educate, build and retain a skilled health workforce, including doctors, nurses, midwives and community health workers, who are a fundamental element of strong and resilient health systems, and recognizing also that 70% of health and care workers are women and that gender inequalities undermine health system performance and global health security;

Expressing further concern over working conditions and management of the health workforce, as well as the challenge of retaining skilled health workers, and recognizing the need for governments to invest in health workforce education and improved working conditions for the health workforce, and to ensure the safety of health workers, including during pandemics;

Recognizing the importance of preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of and by the health workforce;

Noting with concern the threat to human health, safety and well-being caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has spread all over the globe and exposed the vulnerability of current global health architecture, as well as the unprecedented and multifaceted effects of the pandemic, including the severe disruption to societies, education and health systems in maintaining essential health services, economies, international trade and travel and the devastating impact on the livelihoods of people;

Recognizing the consequences of the adverse impact of climate change on health and health systems, as well as other environmental determinants of health, and underscoring the need to mitigate these impacts through adaptation and mitigation efforts, and underlining that resilient and people-centred health systems are necessary to protect the health of all people;

Expressing concern that the 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;

Noting the improvement of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.8.1 on coverage of essential health services by 2019 while expressing concern over the increased prevalence of catastrophic health spending (indicator 3.8.2);

Expressing concern that the unmet health care needs, in particular among poor households that cannot afford the cost of health services, can result in increased morbidity and mortality due to lack of or delayed accesses,

1. URGES Member States:¹

(1) to engage in the preparation of the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage, including the development of a concise and action-oriented, consensus-based political declaration, and to participate in the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 on universal health coverage at the highest level, preferably at the level of Heads of State and Government;

(2) to coordinate across the three high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage, on tuberculosis and on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response to promote a coherent, integrated and action-oriented global health agenda and to maximize synergies of those meetings;

(3) to accelerate the achievement of universal health coverage as committed in resolution WHA72.4 (2019) and United Nations General Assembly resolution 74/2 (2019), through increased and sustained political leadership, public accountability, inclusiveness and social participation by all relevant stakeholders;

(4) to increase COVID-19 vaccine coverage according to WHO and nationally determined coverage targets by reaching the highest coverage among the priority-use groups and health workforce including consideration of integration into immunization programmes and primary health care, in order to conclude the acute phase of pandemic, and to strengthen health systems resilience, in particular health delivery systems and health workforce, including systems to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of and by the health workforce, as a platform for the full and effective implementation of universal health coverage by 2030;

(5) to prioritize fiscal space for health through political leadership, improve health systems efficiency, address the environmental, social and economic determinants of health, reduce waste in health systems, identify new sources of revenue, mobilize domestic resources as the main source of financing for universal health coverage, as well as additional financing sources in line with Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development), improve public financial management, accountability and transparency, and prioritize coverage of the poor and people in vulnerable situations;

(6) to provide a comprehensive evidence-based benefit package to expand access to quality health services on the path towards progressive realization of universal health coverage informed by cost-effectiveness evidence and reduce reliance on out-of-pocket

¹ And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

payment to minimize catastrophic health spending in order to achieve the goal of health equity;

(7) to ensure, 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, and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

(8) to integrate, where relevant, essential public health functions into primary health care including surveillance and outbreak control and supporting a One Health approach, sustain capacity for universal health coverage, scale up telemedicine to increase access to affordable essential health services and maintain all essential health services during emergencies, including through international cooperation;

(9) to strengthen regular monitoring and evaluation for performance improvement of universal health coverage, and to provide information to support global, regional and national monitoring of progress on universal health coverage and inform preparations for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage as well as inform ongoing efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to provide support to Member States in the preparations for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage, and coordinate across the high-level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage, tuberculosis and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, in order to ensure synergies among the three meetings and promote coherent, integrated and action-oriented global health agendas;

(2) to produce a report on universal health coverage as a technical input and hold Member States information sessions to facilitate informed discussions in advance of the negotiations on the political declaration and during the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage;

(3) to review the importance and feasibility of using unmet need for health care services as an additional indicator for monitoring universal health coverage, through regional consultations with Member States, as part of the ongoing WHO review process of health-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators;

(4) to provide technical support and policy advice to Member States, in collaboration with the broader United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, on sustainably strengthening their capacity to generate and use evidence to inform the design and implementation of universal health coverage, strengthening primary health care, promoting access to quality-assured medical products, essential medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and devices, and addressing challenges in health workforce, including to provide support to Member States for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of and by the health workforce, as well as addressing challenges in health information systems and health financing;

(5) to facilitate and support the learning from and sharing of universal health coverage experiences, challenges and best practices across WHO Member States, including in humanitarian and development contexts and by means of international cooperation such as North–South, South–South and triangular cooperation and relevant WHO initiatives;

(6) to support the implementation of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All in order to accelerate progress towards health-related Sustainable Development Goal targets, through collaboration across the relevant United Nations and non-United Nations health-related agencies, with coordinated approaches and aligned support for Member State-led national plans and strategies;

(7) to continue submitting biennial reports on progress made in implementing this resolution to the Health Assembly, as requested in resolution WHA72.4 (2019).

Sixth meeting, 1 February 2023
EB152/SR/6

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