COVID-19 threatens to set back progress towards our goals of achieving Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Commonwealth is mobilising to tackle this pandemic and its far-reaching economic and social ramifications.

Our Health Ministers last week held their first ever virtual meeting to share best practice and re-affirmed their commitment to a coordinated approach to ensure that none are left behind.

I commend to this Assembly the Commonwealth Ministerial Statement issued on behalf of our 54 members, representing one third of humanity.

In accordance with the values and principles of the Commonwealth Charter it commits us to solidarity and mutual support in responding to COVID-19 and the ensuing economic challenges, with continued attention to the needs of the most vulnerable in society and to tackling climate change.

Our health care workers, represent so much that is noble and best in humanity.

Their shining example of professional dedication and selfless service should illuminate our thinking and the proceedings of this Assembly.

This pandemic is affecting every aspect of our human existence, and to fight it we need a whole-of-government approach.

It brings home to us as never before the urgent need for multilateral action.

I thank Dr Tedros for his steadfast leadership of the global response through the WHO, and pledge our Commonwealth support and continuing multilateral engagement to this fight.