

73RD SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY – RESUMED

Australia's written statement on Agenda item 11.4

Australia commends the Secretariat on the finalisation of the global strategy towards eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem.

Australia is pleased with the broad support for the resolution, adopted under silence procedure, and we look forward to working together with Member States, the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners to accelerate action to eliminate cervical cancer. We look forward to the launch of the global strategy next week, which we are co-sponsoring with the WHO, and we encourage other Member States to participate in the launch activities and show their support.

The tools to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health concern – vaccination, screening and treatment of pre-cancer, early detection, prompt treatment and palliative care – already exist. The next critical step is to scale up their implementation consistent with our commitment to universal health care globally.

Australia acknowledges the overwhelming burden of cervical cancer in low to middle income countries, where health systems may have limited capacity. A particular burden falls on vulnerable and marginalised communities, and on women and girls who are living with HIV. We consider cervical cancer is best managed through a comprehensive primary health care approach, which includes integration of HPV vaccination into national immunisation programs.

Australia is pleased to be able to support the introduction of HPV vaccine to countries in our region, such as Solomon Islands and Myanmar, through our long-term support to Gavi.

Australia notes that universal access to sexual and reproductive health services is critical to cervical cancer prevention and control and fundamental to achieving gender equality.

Our cervical cancer screening program, which has been in place since 1991, is breaking new ground with its recent switch to HPV testing. Through Australia's implementation of national HPV vaccinations and cervical screenings, Australia is on track to eliminate cervical cancer by 2035.

We look forward to working together with Member States, the WHO and other partners to accelerate action to eliminate cervical cancer everywhere.