

73RD SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY – RESUMED

Copy of Australia's verbal intervention on Agenda item 11

To maintain progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) we need to fully understand and address the unique challenge COVID-19 presents to population health and health systems. At the same time, work on our pre-existing priorities must continue.

Australia recognises the importance of UHC and primary health care systems that are people-centred and equitable. This is vital to strengthening health care resilience, which has been highlighted as a critical factor in country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many countries will require external technical and or financial support to bring about improvements in primary health care, noting in particular the distinct needs of Small Island Developing States including Pacific Island Countries.

Australia urges the WHO to prioritise allocation of appropriate and sustainable resources for in-country programs aimed at supporting vulnerable countries to achieve UHC through strengthening their primary health care systems.

On prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs):

Australia appreciates the progress made across the NCD health priorities and we look forward to further work on 'Accelerating action to reduce the harmful use of alcohol'.

On epilepsy, we recognise the impact neurological diseases have on individuals and the community as a whole.

Australia is pleased to co-sponsor the resolution on 'Epilepsy' and we look forward to this work fitting within broader efforts to address neurological diseases globally.

On the global vaccine action plan:

We strongly support immunisation as a cost-effective public health intervention to improve population health outcomes, reduce child mortality, prevent severe disease and promote health security.

Australia urges the WHO to maintain, restore, and strengthen immunisation services through and beyond COVID-19, with a focus on equity, quality, efficiency, sustainability, and a coordinated approach that includes key partners such as Gavi.

Australia's strong support for equitable access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines is demonstrated through our commitment to the COVAX Facility's Advance Market Commitment, which will support vaccination in 92 developing countries.

The Australian Government recently committed to provide further vaccine doses and technical support to our regional partners in the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

Chair, we seek guidance from the WHO on how countries can finance improvements in immunisation and encourage all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to the Immunisation Agenda 2030.

On ending tuberculosis, Australia strongly supports the strategy's call to continue and expand funding for new drugs and tools, and for their safe and effective delivery through appropriate policy settings, effective research, training and health systems strengthening.

Finally, we have submitted written statements on accelerating the elimination of cervical cancer and on integrated, people-centred eye care, for which we were proud to lead the resolutions adopted by silence procedure (July-August 2020).