Thailand Written Statement on
Agenda 34.1 Progress reports – A: Sustainable health financing structures
and universal coverage (resolution WHA64.9 (2011))

The timely and effective response of health systems to COVID-19 pandemic is very crucial. Health budget is then one of the key factors to enable health systems to provide appropriate health services.

Thailand has achieved UHC since 2002, meaning that Thai people can access to essential health services including health promotion and disease prevention. This is a good foundation of our health systems. However, this might not be enough for additional services required during the pandemic.

With an effective Public Financial Management (PFM), the Royal Thai Government reallocates funding from different sources including the Government’s COVID-19 relief funds under the Emergency Loan Decree. So, the funding is more quickly mobilized to activities relating to health emergency response allowing health facilities, health personnel, local authorities, and local communities to timely and promptly control the spread of the COVID-19.

The reallocated funds cover a wide range of healthcare services and public health measures, including quarantine facilities, active screening, outpatient and inpatient services for both COVID-19 suspected and confirmed cases, lab tests and lab networks, medicines, hospital transfers, Personal Protective Equipment for health workers, COVID-19 vaccines and vaccinations. These health services cover all peoples in Thailand to ensure that everyone on Thai soil can get access to the services without financial barrier. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

Our experiences show that UHC is a foundation of health systems and effective PFM is vital especially during the emergency situation. Availability and adequacy of health budget is required for timely response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government funding should be reallocated to cover a wide range of services including surveillance, screening, quarantine, and treatment of COVID-19 while can still maintain essential health services.

Last but not least, sustainable health financing to strengthen health systems would be meaningless if people cannot access to essential health services. In addition to measuring SDG 3.8.1 and SDG 3.8.2, Thailand strongly urges WHO to develop a system for monitoring “unmet need” in order to ensure “No one is left behind” in terms of access to and use of essential health services.