

Statement on behalf of WHO African Region Regional Director

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We talk about Universal Health Coverage (UHC), but this is not new. This is a second chance that is being provided to us to be able to get the health of the people closer to them when they need it at any point for anybody without leaving anyone behind. We must be reminded that to be able to do that we must put all our efforts together. It is no longer just for the public sector, it is equally important for the private sector in all forms. It is for the government to put in place an enabling environment for the public sector and other stakeholders to be able to play their part efficiently and be able to synergistically contribute to the wellbeing of the population. However, this requires an enormous input into enhancing leadership and stewardship by the governments. So governments must be in charge. They must be able to cater for everyone to be able to play their part. And this is a big opportunity for the national authorities to re-strengthen their role.

We also need to remember that UHC will require a number of different things. First, it will require more investment. It is not something you are going to get without investing in it. We need more investment and we need to make better use of the little that we have, thus increasing efficiency in utilising resources. We must draw upon each other's positive aspects, creating greater partnership that delivers our ultimate objectives.

Second, in the African region, much as we have made progress, there is still a lot to be done. We also know that we don't know much in terms of how far we are because of our poor health information and data systems. That needs to be improved on so that we actually know whether we are making progress.

Third, through research we can identify which areas need improvement and how we can improve on them.

There are many discussions going on globally including the very high-level meeting taking place during the UN General Assembly in September to discuss the subject of UHC. We should encourage and advocate for our governments at the highest level to participate actively in this discussion so that we can have one voice with the rest of the African leadership. So the discussions that we are going to have this week are going to be very big input into



that discussion and especially with respect to the practical aspects on how to move the principles, which are well known.

UHC roadmap

The African region has been working with the African countries on advancing UHC. The Regional Director has put in place UHC Flagship Programme that is meant to support the processes at national level, identifying what the critical priorities are that we need to tackle as a country, and making those into an actionable road map together with the entire partnership within the country so that it becomes an action plan that we can follow together with a single united force.

We are progressively moving in that direction and we have so far covered in the last one year 16 countries which have now developed their road maps towards that. We encourage the other countries to do so.

I would like to assure you that the Regional Director is very much committed to supporting the processes in the countries and especially discussions like these, and that you should engage with us anytime in every opportunity that you have so that we can put our heads together and be able to move the region ahead. I think we can do it and together definitely we will get there.

I would like to thank you on behalf of the Regional Director for inviting us as the regional WHO office and for giving us the opportunity to participate during this week. Thank you very much.