

Constituency statement to the WHO Executive Board 152 (Jan-Feb 2023) by:

WMA World Medical Association
International Pharmaceutical Federation
International Council of Nurses
World Physiotherapy
International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care
International College of Surgeons
IntraHealth
Women Deliver
Movendi International

Universal Health Coverage

Reorienting health systems to primary health care as a resilient foundation for universal health coverage and preparations for a high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage

Honourable chair, distinguished delegates,

We welcome the Report by the Director General on progress towards achieving UHC within the context of the SDGs, and appreciate the attention drawn to the lack of concrete operational steps being undertaken to realise goals/targets adopted in laws and national plans. One of the concrete steps which is vital to progress on UHC is adequate and sustainably financed health workforce development, including palliative care specialists, with a focus on integrated service delivery for primary health care. In the face of a WHO projected shortfall of 10.2 million health workers by 2030, particularly (but not exclusively) in lower- and middle-income countries, this step cannot be neglected.

Health professionals are at the heart of every health system, and governments and employers must provide safe, supportive environments to help them thrive and to ensure retention of qualified and valuable staff. Positive Practice Environments are vital to achieving UHC, which means ensuring decent working conditions, including occupational safety, manageable workloads, stress reduction measures, adequate remuneration, and the provision of psychosocial support and counselling, especially during times of emergencies.

We also welcome the call for national health systems to be inclusive of civil society and suggest that concrete mechanisms for policy makers and regulators to interact with NGOs such as health professionals' and patients' associations and advocacy groups be recommended to ensure that stakeholders' voices have impact. This will respond to the UHC principles of equity and quality and contribute to the provision of high-quality patient care as well as creating enabling workplaces for the health workforce.

We recognise that UN high-level meeting on UHC provides a unique opportunity to reinvigorate progress towards UHC. Action-oriented outcomes to strengthen health systems provide the basis for implementation and accountability, building on the 2019 Political Declaration.