

U.S. Government Statement at the U.N. High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage

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“ Our work on Universal Health Coverage should be viewed in light of the ultimate goal that we as nations have been working toward at the U.N. and the World Health Organization for more than half a century now: the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health for every person. ”

Mr. President, fellow Ministers, distinguished leaders: It is an honor to be here with you today.

It has been an honor to work with many of you in this room, and I look forward to our discussion on an issue that is relevant to all of us and to the people we serve: ensuring our citizens have access to affordable and effective healthcare.

Our work on Universal Health Coverage should be viewed in light of the ultimate goal that we as nations have been working toward at the U.N. and the World Health Organization for more than half a century now: the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health for every person.

The ultimate goal of better health for all is set forth in the WHO Constitution, the Alma-Ata Declaration more than 40 years ago, and the resolutions of this body and the World Health Assembly.

As the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, it is my job to help all Americans attain better health, and President Trump has embraced a vision for healthcare in the United States that makes better health a top priority.

The President's vision is a healthcare system for the United States with affordable, personalized care, a system that puts the patient in control, gives the patient peace of mind, and treats the patient like a person, not a number.

This means thinking creatively about how to provide more Americans with health coverage and better ways of financing their care

It also means increasing the value of that care, such as by lowering the cost of prescription drugs, and it means tackling health challenges where we believe we can make a real impact.

While this vision specifically pertains to the United States, we believe the focus on better health as the ultimate goal is a shared priority for almost every country as they think about the goal of UHC.

To achieve better health, we must draw on the strengths and resources of both the public and private sectors, promoting partnerships that include civil society, NGOs, faith- and community-based organizations.

This multifaceted approach to UHC stands the best chance of delivering high quality care that centers on patients and improves their health.

It also stands the best chance of improving our ability to respond to infectious diseases that can cross borders, like Ebola and measles, and therefore protecting health for all.

Because we recognize that each nation has its own needs but shares the common goal of health, the United States deplores that some countries politicized the negotiation over this declaration by including language that has been used to promote abortion as healthcare and promote sex education that diminishes the protective role of the family in improving health.

This morning the United States was joined by 18 other nations, representing more than 1.3 billion of the world's population, in issuing a joint statement respectfully calling on member states to join us in concentrating on topics that unite rather than divide on the critical issues surrounding access to healthcare.

The United States joins consensus on today's political declaration, in recognition of the importance of better health for all, but we wish to state clearly that we disassociate from paragraph 68 of the Declaration.

We do not accept the terms "sexual and reproductive health" and "sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights" in this Declaration and note that only documents approved by the General Assembly may inform their understanding and implementation.

These terms must always include language, which some countries blocked, to remind U.N. agencies that each nation has the sovereign right to implement related programs and activities consistent with their laws and policies, and that these terms in no way imply that there is an international right to abortion.

Healthcare exists to improve health and preserve human life—the universal goal we all share.

President Trump and I are working to deliver better health for the United States, and the United States stands ready to assist countries as they work toward better health for all of their people.

I look forward to working with you to achieve the ultimate goal of UHC and all of our work on healthcare: better health and longer lives for all.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to address the Assembly today.

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