



Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the UN
Geneva

H.E. Dr. Zafar Mirza, Minister of State, NHSRC
at the 72nd Session of the World Health Assembly
(20th to 28th May 2019, Geneva)

Mr. President
Dr Tedros, Director General, WHO
Honorable Ministers,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Asalam-o-Alakum”

Mr President!

It is my privilege to be in the midst of such a distinguished audience.

Health is an imperative determinant of socio-economic prosperity and development of any country. No country can achieve their economic targets until it provides health and access to health care services to its population. A healthy nation is actually a wealthy nation. Investing in health sector is crucial for achieving not only national goals but also achieving international obligations towards health targets.

Recognizing that through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, we all have made a bold commitment to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. This

commitment not only includes financial risk protection to population but also access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

It is very unfortunate that almost half of the world population lacks access to essential health services, almost 100 million people a year are forced to choose between food and health care and almost 100 million are pushed into poverty by paying from their own pockets for accessing health care services.

The Government of Pakistan stands firm in its resolve to ensure that its population is healthy and has equitable access to quality health care services for everyone and from everywhere. In Pakistan's National Health Vision, all National and provincial governments along with all major political parties have reiterated their vows to assure Universal Health Coverage to the population by year 2025 and to provide efficient, effective, equitable, accessible and affordable health services to all.

Universal health coverage is a powerful strategy. It does not only assure access to quality health care services at a price affordable to all but also works to reduce poverty, enhance productivity, drive economic growth, promote gender equality and protect populations against epidemics. The best thing about Universal Health Coverage is that it is achievable, regardless of country's income level and through its domestic resources.

Current political leadership and Government in Pakistan is working to assure Universal Health Coverage to its families in an equitable manner. Sehat Sahulat Program is a flagship health care initiative of Federal, Provincial and Regional Governments of Pakistan providing almost half of the country's population (15 million families) with financial protection against catastrophic health expenditure. The program is also assuring access to 15 million families living below poverty line to needed quality health care

services through a network of empaneled hospital across the country. We are aiming to universally expand the coverage of this critical intervention across the country through various health financing mechanism and to all socio-economic cadres of the population.

Mr. President!

Mother and Child health has been one of our top most priorities. A ten-point vision document endorsed by all provinces was developed by our Ministry to give strategic direction. Special attention has been paid to strengthening Immunization of mother and child under the Expanded Program on Immunization to save them from deadly and debilitating illnesses. With our collective efforts we have achieved fifteen to twenty percent increase in coverage of EPI vaccination.

Interlinking these initiatives with Sehat Sahulat Program can assure that no child and mother is left without being provided with quality health care services.

Mr. President!

We are aware that Universal health coverage includes not just health care but also health promotion and prevention and a broader public health approach. A strong primary health care platform with integrated community engagement within the health system is the backbone of universal health coverage, which we are striving for.

To assure community involvement in delivery of services, current Government of Pakistan has restarted its efforts to revitalize Lady Health Workers Program to provide primary health care services at the door step of its population. It has been envisaged to expand the services not only to the uncovered areas of Pakistan but also to include services which were previously not included in its ambit.

At this forum we re-affirm our commitment of leaving no-one behind and ensures equity and quality through the delivery of

integrated package of essential, preventive and curative health care services to every citizen.

I wish the Seventy-Second World Health Assembly great success in its deliberations.

Thank you.
