

WHO NATA MENABDE HLPF REMARKS 8 July 2021

Good morning, and thank you for including WHO in this critical discussion.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is the imperative of all nations and all international organizations dedicated to providing a better world for humanity today, and for the future of humanity.

And the cornerstone of a better world is health – our social, economic, and political stability depend on it. There is no better example of this than the COVID-19 Pandemic, both for demonstrating how far we've come, but also how far we have to go.

COVID-19 has reinforced the existing evidence that investments in health have long-term returns, while underinvestment has potential large-scale social and economic implications; it has proven, without a doubt, that the protection and resilience of our health systems must be a top priority. Financing equitable health systems and an equitable global health architecture should not be viewed as a cost, but rather an investment in a better future.

At the core of all of our efforts must be Universal Health Coverage (UHC), built upon a strong foundation of primary health care. Countries that have invested adequately in primary health care have responded more effectively to the pandemic and are better positioned for more equitable and resilient recovery. Yet, we are not on track to achieve SDG3 and are falling behind on UHC as part of the WHO Triple Billions goals.

We have a responsibility to learn the lessons of COVID19—from the creation of the ACT-Accelerator, which includes the COVAX facility, to the lessons learned from member state response efforts. Some countries affected by conflict are a full ten years behind the SDGs' target date – we therefore must take determined action to reach the most vulnerable. We need to do better with COVID-19 vaccine equity. Currently only 0.9% of people in low income countries have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine, while developed nations are starting to vaccinate healthy teenagers. We must invest in equitable distribution of COVID-19 tools, including tests, treatments, medical supplies and vaccines. And we must invest in health systems and health workers to translate this into action. Global health security starts with local health security.

The WHO has convened the SDG3 Action Plan to ensure a better collaboration of the multilateral agencies in support of equitable and resilient recovery in countries. But we must also work closely with community-led and civil society organizations. It is critical to collaborate on scaling up innovative new health sector technologies, and safe, responsible sharing of disaggregated data. Only through collaboration and inclusion, from the local to the global, can we hope to achieve SDG3 and health for all.