

**Remarks by
Ambassador Ms. Anne Gueguen
Deputy Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations**

Warm thanks to you Kaha, to the Permanent Representatives of Japan and Thailand and to our distinguished briefers.

As previous speakers have eloquently said, the covid highlights our fundamental interconnectedness and the relevance of UHC. The covid 19 crisis provides evidence that UHC and in particular primary health care must be incorporated in the fight against the pandemic. I fully share the idea that our group of friends can contribute to make a difference by first continuing its advocacy work on pushing for stronger and more resilient health systems as it was stated in the political declaration adopted last year on Universal health Coverage. I fully agree that we should seize the opportunity of the current pandemic to communicate more about the main principles of this ambitious declaration, including to stress the benefits with regards to preventing and fighting pandemics. HLPF will be a good opportunity for that. Second our group can help by supporting WHO and helping it to play a key role in providing a framework for equitable access to diagnosis, treatments, vaccines against COVID-19 to everybody all over the world, as well as, first and foremost, to consolidate support for the healthcare systems in the most vulnerable countries, which is the first step to achieving UHC.

To that end France is one of the leading contributors to the ACT-Accelerator initiative and pledged 500 million euros of support.

In addition, we are providing bilateral support to Africa. We have launched a [€1.2bn Covid-19 initiative](#) spearheaded by the French Development Agency to support hospital systems in Africa, regional epidemiological surveillance networks and stakeholders involved on the ground against Covid-19.

Our objectives, at country level, are to push for strong health systems and whole-of-government, whole-of-society, and gender-responsive approach, which means, as Dr Jakab pointed out, that Sexual and Reproductive Health services and Rights must be provided and respected. These principles are the key to successfully achieve UHC in particular in the most affected and fragile states. These objectives are also enclosed in the resolution that the EU is currently leading at the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

To conclude I would like to echo our panelists in emphasizing that beyond addressing the emergency, the response to covid must be used to build back better, so that we are better prepared and more resilient, in line with the 2030 Agenda and UHC is one of the objectives of this Agenda. Investment in health systems and in UHC has indeed long term returns.