



Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage and Global Health

Virtual Briefing on COVID-19 and universal health coverage (UHC)

9:00 am-11:00 am, Friday 15 May 2020 (EST)

"Let this be one vital lesson of this pandemic: the need for new urgency in support of universal health coverage."

– UN Secretary-General António Guterres

As we come together in solidarity to address COVID-19, the commitments our leaders made last September to achieve **universal health coverage (UHC)** at the General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC have never been more important. During this time of human security crisis, if we are to prepare for and contain the pandemic, mitigate the health and economic impacts, as well as to build back better to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to prepare for the future pandemic, it is especially critical that everyone, everywhere is able to access the health services they need without facing financial hardship. Against this background, the Permanent Representatives of Georgia, Japan and Thailand to the United Nations as Co-chairs have the pleasure to invite you to a briefing of the Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage and Global Health to discuss the central and integral role of UHC in the COVID-19 preparedness and response.

Programme (TBC):

9.00-9.10 Welcome Remarks: Co-chairs (PRs of Japan, Thailand, and Georgia to the UN)

Mr. Stewart Simonson, Assistant Director-General, WHO Office at the UN

9.10-9.20 Opening Remarks: H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the General Assembly

9.20-9.25 Special Remarks: Ms. Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director

9.25-9.45 Special Briefing: Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab, WHO Deputy Director-General

9.45-10.50 Discussion *Speakers are encouraged to limit their interventions within 2 min.

10.50-11.00 Closing

Guiding Questions:

1. How has **UHC** contributed to the resilience of health systems and better prepared countries to contain and respond to public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. At a time when the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and left many financially insecure, what measures can the government take to **ensure universal access to essential health services and financial risk protection**, particularly for the most vulnerable?
3. What are some effective practices of strong, resilient and agile health systems, that enable them to maintain **continuity of essential health services** while responding to an outbreak?
4. What are the **best sustainable, multisectoral investments** that policymakers can make, using a whole of government, One Health approach, to "build back better" and accelerate progress toward **achieving the SDGs in the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development**?
5. (For GoF Members) What are **the topics and activities the GoF of UHC should cover and undertake** in the future (e.g. Side event at HLPF, joint statement etc.).

Format: Virtual meeting with PR/DPR+1 *RSVP to ikuko.shirai@dn.mofa.go.jp, connection details to follow