UN’s Universal Health Coverage Declaration: A Bold Commitment to Gender Equality and Health for All

The Alliance for Gender Equality and UHC welcomes the declaration and calls on Member States to use a gender lens to enact UHC at the national level.

New York, September 23, 2019—The Alliance for Gender Equality and UHC welcomes the United Nations’ political declaration on universal health coverage (UHC) as a powerful commitment to achieve health for all. The declaration is grounded in the principle of gender equality and will serve as guidance for governments to enact UHC at the national level.

Co-convened by the International Women’s Health Coalition, Women Deliver, and Women in Global Health, the Alliance represents more than 100 organizations from more than 47 countries. The Alliance advocated for gender equality and a commitment to uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights by issuing clear policy priorities and leading a campaign to incorporate gender-responsive health care throughout the document.

“We are pleased that Member States heeded the broad, diverse call from civil society to prioritize gender equality in the political declaration,” said Katja Iversen, President/CEO of Women Deliver. “For universal health coverage to be truly universal and transformative it must embrace gender equality in all forms—and that means providing explicit guarantees of sexual and reproductive health and rights. As we turn toward implementation, we will be watching closely to make sure that governments invest financially and politically in health care systems that work for all people.”

Universal health coverage has powerful potential. It guarantees universal access to quality health services, essential medicines, and vaccines, and provides protection from catastrophic and routine health costs. The political declaration is clear that without considering the unique health needs of women, girls, and marginalized communities, the promise of UHC will not be realized.

“Importantly, the declaration addresses both health services and systems and commits to advance gender-responsive health services, recognize the distinct role and contributions of women in the health workforce, and promote women’s participation in health leadership and governance,” said Roopa Dhatt, executive director of Women in Global Health.

By addressing health comprehensively and reaffirming commitments to universal access to sexual and reproductive health, rights, and information, the declaration paves the way for transformative change in global health.

“Today’s political declaration is a strong first step in delivering universal health coverage by 2030. It is now on Member States to turn their commitment into action and implement national UHC programs that will uphold human rights and address the entrenched inequalities, barriers, and norms that prevent women, girls, and gender diverse people from accessing the care they need and deserve,” said Françoise Girard, president of the International Women’s Health Coalition.
As governments work to implement the declaration, the Alliance calls on them to fulfill its promise, including to integrate comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and information; invest in women health workers and remunerate unpaid work; collect and use data to promote equity; and ensure affordable and accessible health care services to all.

The political declaration is a critical step toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which seek to end poverty, eradicate inequality, and drive prosperity. Despite this shared commitment to deliver UHC by 2030, the declaration was not reached without tense debate. Sexual and reproductive health and rights were repeatedly contested by conservative governments, who sought to limit commitments to gender equality, human rights, and sexual and reproductive health. These attempts continue the worrying trend of push back on longstanding international commitments to women’s health and rights, particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Yet, even with this continued pressure, momentum for gender equality could not be slowed. The political declaration is a strong and unparalleled commitment by Member States to provide universal health coverage to all by 2030.

**About the Alliance for Gender Equality and UHC:**

The Alliance for Gender Equality and UHC, co-convened by the International Women’s Health Coalition, Women Deliver, and Women in Global Health, comprises more than 100 civil society organizations from more than 40 countries worldwide, to drive collaboration and coordinated advocacy for gender-responsive Universal Health Coverage (UHC) policies, programs, and dialogue; including, but not limited to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Members of the Alliance:

Action for Global Health Network UK
AIHMS-GLOBAL
Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights
Allied Youth Initiative - Uganda
Amref
Amref Health Africa
ARROW(Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women)
Asia Pacific Alliance for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Asociación Civil Mujeres en Línea
ASSOCIATION D’ENTRAIDE MEDICO-SOCIALE AEMS-ASBL
Balance Promoción para el Desarrollo y Juventud A.C
BCH Africa Cameroon
CADS
CARE USA
Centre for Human Rights & Governance
Clean the World Foundation
COJET/PLATE-FORME
COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AID FOUNDATION-Ghana
Community Forum Organisation
CS Collective
DAWN
Development Africa Network
Development Initiative for Community Enhancement (DICE)
Diabetes Eswatini Organization
DSW (Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung)
EATHAN - East Africa Trans Health & Advocacy Network
Education as a Vaccine
Eurasian Network of People who use Drugs
Family Planning NSW
FP2020
Frontline AIDS
Global Coalition of TB Activists
Global Health Advocacy Incubator
Global Health Council
Global Health Disrupted
Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+)
GREATMINDS MENTORSHIP
Groupe des Hommes Voués au Développement Intercommunautaire (GHOVODI)
Health Reform Foundation of Nigeria (HERFRON)
HENNET, the Health NGO Network
Hivos
ICASO
International Centre for Reproductive Health (ICRH) - Ghent University
International Federation of Medical Students Associations (IFMSA)
International Planned Parenthood Federation
International Youth Alliance for Family Planning - IYAFP
Ipas
IWHC - International Women's Health Coalition
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
JOICFP
Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO)
KMET
Knit Together Initiative (KTI)
Latin American and Caribbean Womens Health Network
Liberia Immunization Platform -LIP
Lok kalyan seva kendra
Management Sciences for Health
Marie Stopes International
Medical IMPACT
Medical Women's International Association
Midwifery Society of Nepal
Nadimpally
NCD Alliance
Nigerian Women Agro Allied Farmers Association
Organisation Yinéyédian pour la Nature et le Développement Durable (OND)
Oxfam
PAI
Pakachere Institute of Health and Development Communications
Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
Pathfinder International
Plan International NY Liaison Office
Plan International uk
Promundo
Radha Paudel Foundation
Real Relief
Reprolatina- Soluções Inovadoras em Saúde Sexual e Reprodutiva
Réseau Africa Volontaire (RAV)
Réseau de la société civile d'apui et de soutien à la vaccination et au renforcement ddu systeme de santé en Mauritanie "Vacnet-Mauritanie"
Restless Development
RESURJ
RFSU, IPPF Sweden
Rising Winners Youth Empowerment Initiative ( RWYEI )
Rutgers
Rwenzori Center for Research and Advocacy
Sama Resource Group for Women and Health
Seed Global Health
SERAC-Bangladesh
Society for Mobilization Advocacy and Justice
SPECTRA
Sukaar Welfare Organization Pakistan
SWAP
Swasti Health Catalyst
The George Institute for Global Health
This-Ability Trust
Uganda Network Of Young People Living With HIV
Uganda Youth Alliance For Family Planning And Adolescent Health-UYAFPAH
United Nations Foundation
Visible Impact
Vision Spring Initiatives
White Ribbon Alliance
Women Deliver
Women for Human Rights & Democracy
Women in Global Health
Women's Global Health Innovations
Women@theTable
Y-ACT (AMREF Health Africa)
Young Women For Change
Youth Advocacy Network Sri Lanka
Youth Association for Development
Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights
YouAct

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