

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan**

**At the High-Level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly  
“Universal Health Coverage: Moving Together to Build a Healthier World”**

**23 September 2019**

Your Excellency, President of the 74<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and deepest respect to everyone who contributed to the success of this High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage. I am pleased that the Group of Friends of UHC at the United Nations, which Japan is leading, was launched, and that the Group raised momentum for this meeting. I appreciate the international support for UHC, which made today’s meeting possible.

Japan achieved UHC with the introduction of our national health insurance system in 1961, even while struggling to overcome poverty and destruction after the end of the Second World War. This achievement has enabled all Japanese citizens to enjoy affordable and quality health services and has provided a foundation for Japan’s social and economic development in the postwar period and for a healthy ageing society. Building on Japan’s experiences in UHC, I have emphasized the importance of achieving UHC all across the world.

And yet, still now, about half of the world’s people lack access to essential health services. I sincerely hope that every country will achieve UHC, and thereby attain this cornerstone of human security.

This year, Japan hosted the G20 Osaka Summit and the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development. At these meetings, I discussed with Heads of State how to achieve UHC in their countries. I would like to share two important lessons:

The first lesson is the importance of national ownership. In other words, each government has to have a sense of responsibility to adopt consistent policies and to implement them effectively and efficiently, making the best use of donors’ support.

Japan has supported countries seeking to achieve UHC in various ways, including the development of human resources and the strengthening of primary health care coverage. Japan has promoted a cross-sectoral approach, combining health development with nutrition, water, and sanitation. In moving toward UHC, we will continue to promote cooperation with the private sector and enhance effectiveness and efficiency.

The second lesson is the importance of strengthening health financing. In order to provide essential health services to the most vulnerable populations, countries must ensure adequate and sustainable financing and appropriate resource allocation.

To that end, a whole-of-government approach, with collaboration between finance and health ministries in particular, is crucial. At the G20 Osaka Summit, Japan organized the first Joint Session of Health and Finance Ministers, and affirmed the G20's commitment to the Shared Understanding on the Importance of UHC Financing in Developing Countries. These efforts represent an important step toward the achievement of UHC.

To achieve UHC, a framework for monitoring results and ensuring global accountability is indispensable. We need to discuss ways of promoting UHC at international gatherings, such as the UHC Forum and the Tokyo Nutrition Summit in 2020.

We all know that we must tackle the urgent global challenges in global health as well. Infectious diseases such as Ebola Virus disease have not only taken a heavy toll in terms of lives lost, but have also caused social and economic damages. Japan is committed to assisting developing countries in graduating from foreign assistance through contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, as well as Gavi. Strengthening national health systems in developing countries through these specific measures underpins the achievement of UHC.

Issuing the UHC Political Declaration at this meeting is a major step forward. Let us work together to fulfill the commitments in the UHC Political Declaration as world leaders and realize as well as sustain a society where all people have access to primary health services.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.