

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE MINISTERIAL MEETING ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE: “MEASURING PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19”

New York, 7 October 2020

I send my warmest greetings to this ministerial meeting and my thanks to the co-hosts.

A year ago, I warned that half the world’s people were not able to access affordable, high quality healthcare.

Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that our health systems are inadequate.

Weak health systems and unequal access to healthcare are major reasons why COVID-19 has killed one million people and infected more than 30 million around the world.

Under-investment in health is having a devastating impact on societies and economies, undermining progress on all the Sustainable Development Goals.

COVID-19 has made the need for Universal Health Coverage, outlined in the strong Political Declaration that emerged from last year’s meeting, more urgent than ever.

Achieving Universal Health Coverage is a major recommendation in our latest policy brief.

Other recommendations include strengthening public health measures; coordinating the global response to the pandemic; and protecting other health services during the pandemic, including mental health and sexual and reproductive health programmes.

We also call for funding for the groundbreaking ACT-Accelerator initiative to ensure everyone, everywhere has access to future COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatment, which should be seen as a global public good.

Universal Health Coverage is not only essential to end the pandemic. It will also drive progress across all health-related SDGs, while strengthening the primary health systems that are fundamental to tackling non-communicable diseases.

And it is the only way to prepare for future health crises we know will come.

I hope today's meeting will build momentum for urgent action to transform policies and systems and deliver health and human security for all.

Thank you.