

Statement by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe  
At the UHC Forum 2017  
14 December 2017

President Sall of the Republic of Senegal,  
President Htin Kyaw of Myanmar,  
Secretary-General Guterres of the United Nations,  
Distinguished guests,

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all of you for attending the UHC Forum today.

Exactly two years ago, Japan held an international conference here and expressed our strong commitment to promote Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Today, we are very pleased to hold this event, reorganized as the “UHC Forum 2017,” on a scale much larger than two years ago, jointly with President Kim of World Bank, Director-General Tedros of the WHO, and Executive Director Lake of UNICEF.

For many years, Japan has placed emphasis on the global health agenda from the perspective of human security.

In particular, the promotion of UHC is an essential element of the initiative to realize a society that leaves no one behind, the core principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Based on this recognition, at the G7 Ise-Shima Summit last year, Japan, as President of the Summit, advocated a vision for the promotion of UHC with better preparedness for pandemics, for the first time at the leaders’ level.

Since then, Japan, together with the international community, has been calling for efforts to realize UHC, and has been making its own efforts including

through the announcement of “UHC in Africa” at TICAD VI and taking advantage of such occasions as the United Nations General Assembly meeting this year.

Moreover, last year, Japan formulated the Basic Principles of the Asia Health and Wellbeing Initiative. We plan to share with other Asian countries our own experience of UHC in an aging society in terms of systems such as universal health insurance and long-term care insurance.

Meanwhile, there remain many challenges that we must overcome to achieve UHC. I will touch upon five aspects we need to address in order to accelerate the promotion of UHC in the future.

The first aspect is the need to strengthen the global momentum toward UHC. It was decided in the United Nations resolutions adopted this month to hold a UN high-level meeting on UHC in 2019 and to designate December 12th as the International Universal Health Coverage Day. This is a huge step toward strengthening this momentum.

Japan will also host the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Tokyo in 2020 to promote efforts in the field of nutrition, which constitutes a foundational element of health.

Furthermore, as an outcome of this Forum, I propose to set intermediate targets by 2023, which is the midpoint towards the SDGs target year, in order to accelerate achievement of the UHC-related targets in the SDGs by 2030. Let us aim by 2023 to extend essential health coverage to a further 1 billion people and halve to 50 million the number of people being pushed into extreme poverty by health expenses.

To achieve these intermediate targets, Japan will continue to make its utmost efforts to develop a global framework to promote UHC, together with

Secretary-General Guterres and other leaders of the international community.

Second is the need to develop and implement a framework for cooperation at the country level. To realize UHC, it is necessary to make cross-sectoral efforts, covering such fields as nutrition and water and sanitation, in addition to health systems strengthening.

We propose that individual countries should establish or strengthen platforms to promote UHC. These platforms will support the development of plans and capacity building needed to achieve UHC in individual countries through organic cooperation among stakeholders, including international organizations, development partners, and private-sector players under the ownership of the governments.

In order to flesh out this proposal, Japan, together with partners including World Bank, the WHO and UNICEF, has launched “the Tokyo Joint UHC Initiative”, and we have already started activities in pilot countries.

Going forward, we will share the knowledge gained from pioneering cases with more countries and organizations.

The third aspect is the continuous monitoring of progress. The report jointly issued at this Forum by the WHO and World Bank represents an epoch-making initiative in that it officially measured progress toward the achievement of UHC using the uniform indicator endorsed by the United Nations for the first time. We will support future UHC Forums to encourage the continuation and development of such monitoring.

Fourth, securing sustainable financial resources for UHC is an urgent task. It is important for each government, including not only health ministries but also finance ministries, to mobilize domestic resources in a stable manner and to complement them with international assistance in an effective manner.

Finally, I also would like to stress the importance of innovation. In Africa, an innovative action has been started by using drones based on Japanese technology to help provide healthcare services to remote locations in Africa that have until now been out of reach. Under the TICAD framework, we will share these innovative experiences and promote support for global health.

In order to promote swift progress in these areas comprehensively, Japan hereby pledges to provide UHC assistance worth a total of 2.9 billion dollars. Through this package, Japan will strongly support the efforts of countries and organizations.

Today's forum has been attended by world leaders who exercise leadership in the field of global health. I sincerely hope for an exchange of insights that will set forth the future direction for the promotion of UHC.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.