

His Excellency, Mr. Sihasak, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand,

Mr. Darsalia, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia,

Dr. Tedros, Director-General, World Health Organization,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

To begin I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for your presence today. It is my pleasure once again to co-host this year's Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage together with Thailand and Georgia.

In recent years, the circumstances surrounding global health and other issues have become extremely severe.

The threats posed by the three major infectious diseases—HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria—remain dire, while at the same time, emerging infectious diseases and the burden of non-communicable diseases are increasing.

The Government of Japan positions global health as one of the main pillars of its diplomacy.

We have consistently promoted efforts to achieve UHC in order to realize “Human Security” and protect the lives and dignity of every individual.

UHC means enabling all people to access to the quality health services they need without facing financial hardship.

Amidst increasingly severe global health challenges, achieving UHC is more vital than ever. Today, I would like to discuss two key points toward achieving this goal.

The first point is that building resilient health systems is essential.

It is necessary to make sufficient investments in the health sector to ensure that health systems are capable of providing continuous essential health services, even during disasters and other crises, such as earthquakes, floods, and pandemics.

Based on this approach, Japan has been supporting the development and networking of core medical facilities in Southeast Asia and Africa, as well as human resource development in the medical sector in order to contribute to the promotion of UHC.

The second key point is the need to strengthen health financing.

With the environment surrounding global health going through drastic changes, governments and international organizations are faced with mounting financial challenges.

In low- and middle-income countries in particular, it is crucial to reduce dependence on financial assistance from donors and

to maximize the use of domestic resources, as well as to secure and strengthen sustainable health financing.

To address these challenges, the Government of Japan is promoting the “UHC Knowledge Hub” in collaboration with WHO and the World Bank. This initiative aims to support capacity building for health financing, targeting officials from both health and finance ministries in developing countries.

As confirmed at the High-Level Meeting on NCDs yesterday, it is necessary, from the perspective of strengthening health financing, to involve the private sector, such as the food and pharmaceutical industries, as well as civil society in the areas of NCDs and mental health.

Ladies and gentlemen, last month, Japan hosted the Ninth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, TICAD9, together with African nations in Yokohama.

At the conference, we shared the view with African countries that the participation of the private sector is necessary to address various challenges, such as strengthening Africa's own capabilities to produce medical products and incubating digital health companies.

Furthermore, health promotion and disease prevention are key to reducing burdens on health financing. Japan therefore strongly supports the promotion of preventive measures based on WHO guidelines.

Only five years remain until 2030. The WHO's central role in the health sector is indispensable to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in that time.

The Government of Japan will continue to work with the Group of Friends of UHC to further advance efforts to achieve UHC and contribute to global health.

Thank you.