

## 7<sup>th</sup> Session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers (ICHM)

Abu-Dhabi, UAE, 15-17 Dec 2019

### UHC Panel Discussion

#### Summary and Recommendations

A High-Level Panel Discussion on UHC was organized during the 7<sup>th</sup> ICHM with the aim of sharing Member States' experiences and lessons learnt from global best practices, to help define a joint vision to advance UHC in OIC Member States and identify an agenda of collaboration across relevant stakeholders – including with international organizations and development partners (including development banks). The Panel Discussion was structured to include high-level representations from the respective OIC regions, besides: international organizations (WHO and GAVI), a development bank (Islamic Development Bank) and academia.

The Panel included the following 9 panellists:

1. H.E. Dr Terawan Agus Putranto, Minister of Health, Indonesia
2. H.E. Dr Mai Alkaila, Minister of Health, Palestine
3. Dr Noursheen Hamid, Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Pakistan
4. Dr Ahmad Al-Mandhari, Regional Director, WHO EMRO
5. Dr Shaza Sid Ahmed, Director General Primary Health Care, Sudan Federal Ministry of Health
6. Dr Wahid Majrooh, Senior International Relations Adviser, Afghanistan
7. Dr El-Bashier Sallam El-Taher, Lead Global Health Specialist, Islamic Development Bank Group
8. Mr Pascal Bijleveld, Director, Country Support, GAVI – the Vaccine Alliance
9. Prof Talgat Nurgozhin, Rector of Kazakh National Medical University, Kazakhstan

Following a general introduction to UHC and its principles, dimensions and goals, an update on where the world stands with regard to progressing towards UHC was presented as it was recently documented in the 3<sup>rd</sup> UHC Global Monitoring Report launched on 23 Sept 2019. This was followed by a series of questions addressed to each of the panellists.

Key messages from the Panel Discussion included the following:

1. UHC is key to addressing emerging health challenges and enhancing socio-economic development. It is a global priority which gained political commitment following the endorsement of the Sustainable Development Agenda in 2015, and more recently the 'UHC Political Declaration' at the UNGA High Level Meeting on UHC organized on 23 Sept 2019.
2. While each country needs to develop its own path to UHC, countries aspire to learn from what did and did not work in contexts similar to their own. Below are key lessons learnt from the experiences represented by the various panellists:
  - a. **Indonesia** – creating a single pool to cover a large population might result in unintended consequences of geographic disparities in service availability and use if pre-existing supply-side inequalities are not addressed. Using geographic

allocation formulas as “stage one” followed with adequate provider payment methods as “stage two” could help address such inequities.

- b. **Palestine** – to cope with challenges imposed by occupation, multiple service providers need to coordinate their efforts. Relevant system foundations – including: good levels of health expertise, clinical capacity, and public and private service delivery capacity, are essential to survive repeated crises. While occupation is the main challenge to enhancing UHC, additional challenges exist – including: overreliance on donor funding, which proved unpredictable and unsustainable.
- c. **Pakistan** – the experience of Pakistan in developing a UHC Benefit Package demonstrates the importance and relevance of defining what to be covered under a UHC agenda and proceeding in shaping the entire health system to ensure its effective delivery in good quality and with financial protection. Such approach of ‘progressive universalism’ holds a lot of merit for expanding UHC and is in line with the Salalah Declaration of EMR Member States.
- d. **WHO EMRO** – WHO EMRO has consistently prioritized advancing UHC in its support to its Member States. Several Regional Committee sessions discussed the challenges and priorities to advance UHC for all the populations of the region, and endorsed relevant resolutions that need to be followed up. In 2018, UHC was included as the first Regional Strategic Priority in EMR Vision 2023, which is based on the noble goal of “Health for All by All”. Several tools were also developed to support countries of the Region to pursue UHC, including a *“UHC Framework for Action”*.
- e. **Sudan** – using innovative revenue raising mechanisms such as Zakat Fund in Sudan allowed expanding coverage to the poor and vulnerable population under the National Health Insurance Fund. Sudan has made exceptional progress in separating financing and provision of health care and in pooling and aligning various funds to limit fragmentation and enhance performance and accountability.
- f. **Afghanistan** – as a country in chronic conflict, Afghanistan managed to leverage donors’ funded development projects – including the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) Project which is funded by the World Bank, EU and USAID – to develop and finance two health packages: a Basic Package of Health Service (BPHS) and an Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS), for the entire population, in coordination with international and national NGOs. The new Sahatmani program focuses on enhancing performance through a Performance Management Office (PMO) that is responsible for managing providers and pay for services using a mixed Provider Payment Method incorporating: a lump sum and a pay-for-service portions.
- g. **IsDB** – Development Banks play important role in supporting countries to implement their health sector reform agenda to advance the goals of UHC. The recently developed new “Health Sector Policy” of the IsDB has as a theme: *“Strengthening PHC as Gate for Achieving UHC in the IsDB member*

*countries*”. This provides a good platform for supporting countries in implementing their reform agenda for UHC.

- h. **Gavi** – innovation is key to ensure effective progress towards UHC. Business as usual does not work in today’s world. Since its foundation in 2000, Gavi played a major role in improving access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the poorest countries of the World. It has been using innovative solutions to mobilize necessary resources and ensure effective program delivery.
- i. **Kazakh National Medical University** – Moving towards UHC requires evidence generation on what does and does not work. While countries look to learn from one another, evidence needs to be home-grown. This calls for effective involvement and partnership between policymakers, practitioners and academia. Academic institutions have the mandate of generating evidence and building national capacities in health system strengthening and UHC.

### **Recommendations on Next Steps:**

The newly established “*Health Sector Policy*” of the IsDB provides a good platform for mobilizing necessary funding for facilitating implementation of various health system development strategies at foundation, institution and transformation levels. Below are some concrete recommendations to foster collaboration and coordinate efforts across OIC Member States and their stakeholders in the area of UHC:

1. Undertake a mapping and analytical exercise to assess where OIC Member States stand with regard to UHC; and develop country-relevant roadmaps to advance UHC in its three dimensions.
2. Develop a platform of Ministers of Finance, Social Development, Labor and Health to discuss and coordinate efforts related to HSS for UHC.
3. Ensure effective implementation of the commitments made in the UNGA “UHC Political Declaration” in OIC Member States with support from development partners.
4. Intensify and coordinate efforts to support IsDB in implementing its new “*Health Sector Policy*”.
5. **For WHO** – (a) to share with OIC General Secretariat the WHO-relevant products in support of implementing the resolutions endorsed by OIC Member States; and (b) to involve relevant participation from OIC General Secretariat in WHO/EMRO country support missions in a manner that facilitates experience sharing from a wider inter-regional perspective and ensure proper coordination.