

A close-up photograph of two women smiling. The woman on the left has dark hair and is wearing a blue top and a green beaded necklace. The woman on the right is wearing a brown and red patterned top. They are both looking towards the camera with warm, joyful expressions.

**Reinforcing collaboration
on Universal Health Coverage
to deliver greater global health equity
and health security**

Contents

3 — The current context - and what we learned from COVID-19

4 — The role of the private sector in UHC

5 — The essential elements of achieving UHC – and how our industry is playing its part

Ensure health system readiness and resilience for UHC (post-COVID-19)

Invest more and invest better toward achieving UHC

Leverage private sector innovation, contributions, and partnerships

7 — Conclusions

The current context - and what we learned from COVID-19

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is defined to mean that everyone, everywhere, should have access to the health services (health promotion, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment) they need without risking falling into financial hardship. UHC is a major cornerstone of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is the backbone of robust health systems that are needed to deliver greater global health equity and health security.

In 2023, the year of the second UN High Level Meeting on UHC, the world continues to grapple with the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. Our collective experience from dealing with the pandemic emphasizes the need for health system readiness and resilience, together with an approach that supports people and patients over their life course, particularly via sustained investments in primary health care. It is estimated that primary health care can take care of 80-90% of a country's healthcare needs.¹

The second UN High-Level Meeting on UHC, which will take place in September 2023, follows the first meeting in 2019 and will review progress on the 2019 UN Political Declaration on UHC² and deliver a new resolution. UHC is also a top political priority during the Japanese G7 Presidency in 2023 as well as other multilateral fora.

Building on the work we did in 2019 in collaboration with UHC2030 and other stakeholders, and on our own Policy Perspectives on UHC³, the innovative pharmaceutical industry stands together with other members of the global health community to support countries in accelerating their efforts to achieve UHC targets set in the SDGs. Despite the progress made, there is a long way to go, with half of the world's population still lacking access to the quality health services they need, when and where they need them, including during emergencies.⁴ A recent World Bank and WHO global monitoring report estimated that, in 2017, the total number of people incurring financial

hardship and therefore facing catastrophic health payments ranged between 1.4 and 1.9 billion people.⁵ Given the overall devastation caused by the pandemic, this number is likely to be far higher post-COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a reversal of recent gains made in global health outcomes as resources were diverted toward emergency response and disruptions occurred to essential health services for key areas such as non-communicable diseases (NCDs). According to WHO, 136 countries reported that essential health services to address NCDs were disrupted by COVID-19, with greater disruptions being reported in low and middle-income countries.⁶ The significant advances made in the past decades in childhood vaccine coverage have also been impacted. Despite COVID-19 showing the value of adult immunization programs, not enough is being done to ensure a life-course approach to vaccination. There is now broad recognition that adults are at increased risk of infectious diseases, compounded by chronic conditions and pandemics – all of which constitute a “perfect storm” that requires intensified efforts to build strong and resilient health systems.

Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic emphasize the need for health system readiness and resilience together with a life course approach, particularly via sustained investments in primary healthcare (PHC). These elements are critical to achieving UHC, which will in turn improve health equity and build country resilience and preparedness for the next threats to global health security.



The role of the private sector in UHC

Although UHC is the primary responsibility of governments, access to treatments is a high-profile element that requires action from many stakeholders including manufacturers, healthcare professionals, providers, and payers. There is also an increasing realization that meaningful collaboration is critical, and the private sector must be viewed as an important global health partner in working together to deliver UHC. No single government, organization, or sector can achieve UHC on its own, particularly when countries are facing a combination of socio-economic and political shocks such as climate change, inflation, recession, increasing debt burdens, and war, which place even greater pressures on prioritizing health as an investment.

The last Political Declaration on UHC in 2019 recognized the need to build stronger partnerships and develop more constructive engagement with the private sector. This was especially the case in improving accessibility and availability of health products, encouraging and promoting innovative incentives and financing mechanisms for health R&D, and in recognizing the role the private sector can play in stimulating investment in UHC. Despite this, there remains a real need to build trust between public and private sectors and for greater support and know-how on how best to work with the private sector on achieving UHC objectives.

The essential elements of achieving UHC and how our industry is playing its part

The innovative pharmaceutical industry plays a unique role in driving innovation. Medical innovation is not only a foundation of modern healthcare, but a critical element for achieving UHC. Access to safe, effective, quality, and affordable medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics to prevent, manage, or even cure disease fulfils the promise of innovative medical technologies as a key contributor to good health and well-being. Our industry is committed to playing its part to support access to quality healthcare that contributes to global health progress.

Collectively, we must recognize and support the role of innovation, enabling strong health systems and multi-stakeholder partnerships to improve readiness, resilience and countries' future health security. The innovative pharmaceutical industry stands together with other members of the global health community to support countries in accelerating their efforts to achieve UHC. As long-term partners in the UHC 2030 movement, our members fully support the 8-point UHC Action Agenda outlined by UHC2030, which urges political leaders to reinvigorate progress towards delivering health for all by taking urgent actions to implement UHC reforms with accountability.



Our industry is committed to scaling up our contributions to UHC. We acknowledge our role in helping to improve access to quality, affordable vaccines, medicines, and healthcare for all via innovative approaches and partnership.



The Action Agenda reinforces the need to strengthen national and international resilience and to improve global health security and encompasses a number of important recommendations.⁷

There are three key areas which we believe are most critical to achieving UHC, all of which are aligned with the Action Agenda, and the five commitments within the updated UHC2030 Private Sector Constituency statement. Within each of these areas, the innovative pharmaceutical industry is working to support the efforts of governments and other stakeholders to provide the necessary enabling environments:

Ensure health system readiness and resilience for UHC (post-COVID-19)

It is critical to improve health system readiness and resilience as a cornerstone to achieve UHC, particularly at a primary health care (PHC) level, consisting of life course approaches to prevention (including vaccination), health promotion, screening, diagnosis, treatment, surveillance, and follow-up. We are supporting governments in the development of whole-of-society solutions designed to strengthen health systems across the entire continuum of care from awareness and prevention through to adherence.

Invest more and invest better toward achieving UHC

Achieving SDG 3 requires investing more and investing better on effective interventions toward achieving UHC (as identified by UHC 2030, the Lancet Countdown 2030, and others) as well as mobilizing domestic financing to enable sustained local investments toward UHC (as called for by UHC2030, Chatham House Commission, and others). We work with partners to explore sustainable financing approaches to catalyze increased domestic resources for health. For example, we work with institutions such as the World Bank to advance joint action in-country to generate high-level evidence on the economic impact of NCDs to make the case for national health policies that can be integrated into countries' national UHC agendas and to accelerate public and private investment in NCD prevention, treatment, and care through a portfolio of projects that inform national scale-up and support innovative financing for NCDs.

Leverage private sector innovation, contributions, and partnerships

The innovative pharmaceutical industry is committed to scaling up our contributions to UHC via innovative approaches and partnerships in the areas of R&D, product development, product supply, capacity building, health literacy, healthcare delivery models, and ethics and business integrity standards – to improve patient access to quality, affordable vaccines, medicines, and healthcare.

Our industry plays a crucial role in developing and delivering health innovations to support these priorities. This includes innovative approaches to R&D and product development as well as innovative access, product supply and healthcare delivery models, all of which were critical during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

We support country efforts to mobilize the necessary resources and implement policies to address local people and health system needs and priorities. To elevate discussions beyond ministries of health, Heads of State and ministries of finance, education, economy, and others must also support the principle that health is an essential driver of economic growth and a necessary condition for achieving the SDGs. A genuine human-centered, whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approach is needed. This requires investments in health services and critical decisions about coverage, payment, and delivery models. It also requires a sustained commitment to uphold shared standards of ethical conduct and decision-making, fostering people's trust in their health system and confidence in their care.

Recognizing the need to move together, the innovative pharmaceutical industry is committed to playing our part and we acknowledge our role in helping to improve access to medicines as a key contributor toward achieving UHC. We must also work together to support countries to make sustainable investments in UHC, properly resourcing and protecting health and care workers, and strengthening primary health care systems as the foundation of UHC. UHC is the only solution to ensuring a stable and predictable flow of resources to the health sector and is an investment in the foundation of a healthier, more sustainable future for all.



References

- 1 The Lancet (2018). The Astana Declaration: the future of primary health care? [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(18\)32478-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(18)32478-4)
- 2 UN (2019) Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage “Universal health coverage: moving together to build a healthier world” <https://www.un.org/pga/73/wp-content/uploads/sites/53/2019/07/FINAL-draft-UHC-Political-Declaration.pdf>
- 3 IFPMA (2019). Policy Perspectives on Universal Health Coverage from the Innovative Biopharmaceutical Industry <https://ifpma.org/publications/policy-perspectives-on-universal-health-coverage-from-the-innovative-biopharmaceutical-industry/>
- 4 UHC2030. Action Agenda. <https://www.uhc2030.org/un-hlm-2023/action-agenda/>
- 5 WHO and World Bank (2021). Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2021 global monitoring report. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/e80ff698-39c9-56c1-81cb-a7fa3e15d04a>
- 6 WHO (2020) Rapid assessment of service delivery for NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/rapid-assessment-of-service-delivery-for-ncds-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- 7 Action Areas are as follows: champion political leadership for UHC; leave no one behind; adopt enabling laws and regulations; strengthen the health and care workforce for quality health care; invest more, invest better; move together towards UHC; guarantee gender equality; and connect UHC and health security.

About IFPMA

The International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA) represents over 90 innovative pharmaceutical companies and associations around the world. Our industry's almost three million employees discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that advance global health. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community improve the lives of people everywhere.

For more information, visit ifpma.org

APRIL 2023