



IAPO Intervention: Universal Health Coverage
63rd Session of the World Health Organization's Regional Committee for Europe

Honourable members of the Committee, distinguished delegates.

The International Alliance of Patients' Organizations is an alliance of patients' organizations that represent the interests of patients worldwide. We have over 200 members that span over 60 countries and 50 disease areas, representing an estimated 365 million patients.

Universal health coverage is critical to delivering better health care. Expanding universal health coverage across Europe is an opportunity to ensure health for all, tackle poverty and encourage sustainable development. IAPO urges Member States to implement strategies to move towards universal health coverage. However, what is meant by universal health coverage is often poorly understood. IAPO calls on WHO to more clearly define universal health coverage and to scale-up support for Member States to implement or expand it.

In addition, the definition of universal health coverage must reference patient-centred healthcare and acknowledge its key principles of respect for the patient, choice and empowerment, patient involvement in health policy, access to safe quality and appropriate services and treatments, support for patients' needs and information. Only with such an approach, will the goals of universal health coverage be achieved.

Access to essential medicines is vital in achieving universal health coverage and is one of the pillars of primary care. IAPO is pleased to see that the global monitoring framework for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases includes a target of 80% availability of the affordable basic technologies and essential medicines, by 2025. With the expansion of universal health coverage, there is an opportunity to build on WHO's progress towards ensuring access to essential medicines in all WHO strategies, including the post-2015 development agenda.

IAPO will continue to support WHO and other interested stakeholders in their efforts to expand universal health coverage worldwide. Thank you for your attention.