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Addressing:
71st Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-
East Asia
Agenda item 8.5:
Annual report on monitoring progress on UHC
and health-related SDGs

IOGT International Official Statement
71st Session WHO RCM for South-East Asia
Agenda item 8.5: Annual report on
Monitoring progress on UHC and health-related SDGs

04.09.2018

Dear chair, Dear Regional Director, Dear Excellencies,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you briefly.

IOGT International commends the Secretariat for the annual report on progress towards UHC and the health-related SDGs. We applaud the efforts outlined in the report. We support the approach to Universal Health Coverage as the unifying platform for reaching the health-related SDGs. IOGT International welcomes the renewed attention by Member States to primary health care to address changing health needs.

However, we wish to highlight that we miss a focus on prevention and health promotion. Prevention and health promotion are critical to create norms and environments that foster the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and social well-being. Building societies, communities and environments that allow for healthy lifestyles and foster health-promoting norms is essential because treatment and care alone are not enough to achieve health for all and reach the health-related SDGs. Prevention is economically smart, scientifically sound and morally right. Therefore, we encourage WHO and Member States to pivot to prevention and health promotion to achieve greater progress towards UHC and the SDGs.

Secondly we encourage a renewed focus on cross-cutting risk factors adversely affecting communicable and non-communicable diseases, other health-related SDGs like road traffic injuries and maternal, child and adolescent health as well as SDGs beyond health. Evidence shows that addressing cross-cutting risk factors is cost-effective and high-impact because best buy policy solutions are available.

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For example, alcohol is a major and cross-cutting obstacle to universal health coverage and the SDGs. In the WHO SEARO region, alcohol consumption is gradually rising, particularly among adolescents, youth and women. The region also faces the burden of high prevalence of heavy episodic alcohol consumption and is aggressively pursued by the alcohol industry as emerging market. The magnitude and severity of alcohol harm across the region are prominent, especially concerning NCDs, HIV and TB, violence and road traffic injuries. And yet, the overall situation of implementing the WHO Global Alcohol Strategy in the region is bleak. But without evidence-based action on alcohol policy implementation, universal health coverage will not be achieved and the SDGs will not be reached.

A comprehensive approach of identifying cross-cutting risk factors and tackling them in an integrated manner is essential for Member States across the region. The best buy alcohol policies hold considerable potential for UHC and the SDGs because they generate returns on investment.

I thank you for your attention.

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