



**31<sup>st</sup> Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF31)  
23-26 November 2023, Manila**

---

**RESOLUTION ON REGIONAL COOPERATION ON  
UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

*Sponsored by Mexico and Philippines*

We, the parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF), gathering in Manila, Republic of the Philippines for the 31st Annual Meeting of the APPF under the theme "Resilient Partnerships for Peace, Prosperity, and Sustainability":

**Recognizing** that the Asia-Pacific region's high vulnerability to a wide range of natural disasters, as well as the outbreaks of infectious diseases, including the most recent COVID-19 pandemic, poses significant challenges to the region's health systems;

**Acknowledging** that access to quality healthcare is a fundamental human right, and that universal health coverage is an important factor in preventing and responding to natural disasters and outbreaks;

**Committing** to ensuring that all citizens have equal access to a universal healthcare system, regardless of their status in life, gender, or race, and that they can access the medical services they need, wherever and whenever, without financial barriers, in accordance with international human rights principles;

**Recognizing** the need to tackle health inequities and inequalities within and among countries through political commitments, policies, and international cooperation, including those that address social, economic, environmental, and other determinants of health;

**Noting** the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage adopted during the United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage 2023, to enhance our efforts to achieve universal health coverage by 2030;

**Considering** Goal No. 3.8 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the World Health Organization and the Inter-Parliamentary Union's document "The Path to Universal Health Coverage", which both emphasize the importance of achieving universal health coverage, including access to quality and affordable healthcare services, financial risk protection, and essential medicines and vaccines for all;

**Reaffirming** the resolutions adopted at previous meetings of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, including increasing investment in health services to strengthen the resilience of health systems, and promoting technological and financial innovation in primary health care services;

**Recalling**, through the years, the relentless efforts of the APPF to address the issues on universal health care (UHC) relative to natural disasters and outbreaks through the adoption of a number of resolutions, such as the following:

- Resolution on Cooperation for the Prevention and Eradication of Emerging and Infectious Diseases (APPF12/Res. 16);
- Resolution on Facing Ebola and Other Infectious Diseases in a Coordinated Manner for the Prevention of Emergencies and Health Disasters (APPF23/Res. 11);
- Resolution on Regional and Sub-Regional Strategies on Combatting Non-Communicable and Communicable Diseases (APPF25/Res.11); and
- Resolution on Developing Health Services and Facilitating Equitable Access to Primary Health Care (APPF30/Res. 10);

**Acknowledging** the progress made towards universal healthcare in the Asia-Pacific region, while recognizing the persistent challenges, including weak health systems, limited access to quality and affordable healthcare, the disproportionate impact of disasters and outbreaks on vulnerable groups, economic constraints, financing difficulties, coordination and preparedness gaps, inadequate resilient infrastructure, and insufficient health workforce capacity;

**Considering** the consequences of COVID-19, making it evident that, when health is threatened by emerging diseases or pandemics, the general well-being of the population and its development is also threatened;

**Underscoring** that universal health care would not only improve the health of the population and reduce financial gaps, but would also help create new economic opportunities, reduce poverty, and help build a more stable and fair society;

**Acknowledging** that resilient national health systems and universal access to healthcare are critical foundations to prepare for future health crises;

**Welcoming** coordination mechanisms such as the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All (SDG3 GAP) established in 2019, which brings together thirteen (13) multilateral health, development, and humanitarian agencies to help countries accelerate progress on health-related Sustainable Development Goals targets, and UHC 2030 which provides a global platform for multiple stakeholders to connect, work together, and influence national and international commitments;

**Acknowledging** the commitment of the ASEAN Member States in the "Declaration on Strengthening Social Protection" adopted in 2013, to collectively accelerate the progress towards UHC in the region by strengthening the capacity to assess and manage health systems to support UHC through the sharing of experiences,

information, and experts, and in the “ASEAN Leaders’ Declaration on ASEAN as an Epicentrum of Growth” at the 43<sup>rd</sup> ASEAN Summit to identify synergies and potential cross-sectoral and cross-pillar collaborations to accelerate ASEAN’s efforts in achieving Universal Health Coverage;

**Reaffirming** the important role of parliaments in advancing the UHC agenda, and the need for meaningful collaboration with public authorities, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, private sector entities, and all relevant stakeholders to achieve UHC;

**Noting** that despite progress towards UHC, only about 63.4% of the Asia-Pacific population is covered by a health care scheme, leaving over 1.6 billion people unprotected, with inequalities within and across countries;

**Expressing concern** that vulnerable groups such as women, children, adolescents, the elderly, and people with disabilities, who often have limited financial resources, bear the greatest burden of ill health and preventable deaths, placing them at an economic disadvantage and higher risk of poverty;

**Realizing** that UHC implies national health policies and programs ensuring all individuals and communities have access to a wide range of essential, quality health services, delivered in a respectful, equitable, and cost-effective manner;

**Recognizing** that UHC must ensure equal service provision, without discrimination, ensuring no one, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, is left behind;

**Reiterating** that primary health care, including immunization campaigns, is the most inclusive, effective, and efficient approach to enhancing people’s physical and mental health and well-being, and is also the cornerstone of a sustainable health system capable of UHC;

**Emphasizing** that investing in UHC involves sustainable and adequate health funding, and investment in human capital that generates jobs, increases growth, and reduces inequalities, especially gender inequality;

**Acknowledging** that resilient national health systems and universal access to healthcare are critical foundations to prepare for future health crises;

**Urging** the APPF Members to share best practices in overcoming difficulties to achieving a universal health care in their respective countries, and ideas on how they can collaborate to enhance the required collective preparedness and response to natural disasters and epidemics; and

**Reaffirming** the commitment of the APPF members to attaining universal healthcare access;

**RESOLVE TO:****1. Call on** APPF Member Parliaments to:

- Promote universal health coverage (UHC) as a national goal and foster dialogue to develop better measures to achieve it, engaging all social, economic, and political sectors;
- Establish parliamentary mechanisms to promote UHC, including adequate budgets, research and development, expanded services, and reduced out-of-pocket costs;
- Use data efficiently to support UHC implementation and track progress;
- Promote and strengthen early warning systems and resilience mechanisms to prepare for future health crises;
- Encourage UHC inclusion in parliamentary agendas and debates;
- Advocate for increased public health spending, with a focus on primary care and disease prevention;
- Support the development and implementation of national UHC plans that guarantee equitable access to affordable, high-quality healthcare for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or socioeconomic status;
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to plan and implement the transition of health systems towards universal coverage, while continuously investing in and strengthening health delivery systems to meet the health needs of the population in the Asia-Pacific region;
- Monitor the implementation of UHC programs and hold governments accountable for progress;
- Advocate for investments in human resources, infrastructure, and medical equipment to increase the resilience of health systems during crises;
- Support calls for investments in training, developing, recruiting and retaining a skilled health workforce, including doctors, nurses, midwives and community health workers, as fundamental to strong and resilient health systems;
- Support calls for sustained improvement of working conditions and management of the health workforce to ensure the safety of health workers;
- Support cross-sectoral collaboration to address the social determinants of health, including poverty, malnutrition, and lack of education access;

- Plan for the effective implementation of cost control measures to ensure the stability and sustainability of the universal healthcare system without compromising the quality of services;
  - Establish a legal framework for UHC to guarantee the right of everyone to public health and medical care, without discrimination;
  - Work closely with national parliaments to raise awareness among parliamentarians about UHC and engage them fully in the process, to sustain political support towards achieving UHC by 2030;
  - Integrate UHC into national development plans and policies, recognizing health as an immediate prerequisite and a factor in countries' sustainable development;
  - Adopt a partnership-based approach to achieving UHC, raise public awareness of UHC, and engage communities and all relevant stakeholders in developing plans and strategies that respond to prevailing conditions;
  - Establish an integrated national results-based monitoring and evaluation system for measuring progress on UHC, ensuring regular reporting and accurate use of disaggregated data to identify and eliminate gender-based discrimination in the implementation of UHC; and
  - Ensure financial protection to reduce out-of-pocket payments for health services and eliminate financial barriers that prevent access to health;
2. **Facilitate** strengthened regional cooperation on UHC for natural disasters and outbreaks through:
- Sharing of best practices and lessons learned, developing joint programs and initiatives, and mobilizing resources;
  - Ensuring that parliamentarians have a vital and meaningful role in developing and implementing UHC plans and disaster risk reduction strategies; and
  - Providing parliamentarians with the necessary resources and support to carry out their role effectively;
3. **Urge** the APPF Member Parliaments to work together to strengthen the region's collective preparedness and response to future health crises through:
- Developing regional health security frameworks;
  - Harmonizing health regulations and standards;

- Conducting joint drills and exercises; and
- Maintaining surveillance and early warning systems;

4. **Develop** a system for the APPF to:

- Assess and manage risks, monitor, evaluate, and report on the progress of Member Parliaments in achieving UHC and constructing resilient health systems;
- Facilitate the sharing of best practices and lessons learned among Member States; and
- Provide Member States with technical assistance and support as they develop and implement UHC plans and disaster risk reduction strategies.