

Statement delivered in the General Debate on behalf of
H.E. Mrs. Svandís Svavarsdóttir, Minister of Health
72st World Health Assembly
May 2019

Theme of general debate: “Universal health coverage: leaving no-one behind”

Mrs./Mr. President, Director-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Last year, the Director General, called upon Member States to take concrete steps towards Universal Health Coverage and to make commitments in increasing the access to services and reduce out-of-pocket spending.

The Government of Iceland is committed to strengthen further Public Health Services in Iceland and to promote the Primary Health Care as the first point of entry into the Health Care System. Our goal is to secure equal access to the best Health Care and to reduce out-of-pocket spending.

A new quality and payment system is being introduced that is expected to improve access to primary care as the first contact point into the health care system. It is also expected to improve quality of care and coordination in patient care in Iceland.

The mission statement of the government, that took office in January 2018, emphasizes the need of health care strategy with focus on equal access, efficient and safe health care delivery and a vision of “Health in All Policies”.

A new National Health Policy is currently being discussed by the Parliament. The proposed policy takes into account the health needs and the well-being of

the people in Iceland. It also defines better the role of individual aspects of the health services and how these are interrelated. The Ministry of Health will be organizing a biannual National Health Congress, to ensure active stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the National Health Plan.

With the New Health Plan, the role and responsibility of different health care providers will be better defined and the collaboration between parties will be evaluated and refined.

Mrs./Mr. President,

The Government of Iceland is increasing attention to mental health services both in Hospitals and in the Primary Health Care. Funding to Mental Health Care will be increased and mental health teams are being established across the country. Special focus on mental care and elderly care is important at all levels, and in particular at the primary level where prevention plays a crucial role as well as supporting self-care and independent living.

Our hospital services will also be strengthened, and we will increase our efforts to improve access to necessary medicines and medical products.

The Government of Iceland has promoted cooperation within the Nordic Council of Ministers for spinal cord injuries. And I am happy that a common database has been established in Norway. Such a database can be the basis for progress in science, treatment and care for those suffering from spinal cord injuries.

Mrs./Mr. President,

A strong society is based on good health and well-being of its citizens. People should be able to enjoy life in good health and for that to realize we need to commit to Universal Health Coverage and consider Public Health in all policies and actions of our governments.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a very ambitious one. We see the 2030 agenda as supportive to Member States in achieving health and well-being for all at all ages, through increasing governance, focusing on leaving no one behind, strengthening health systems to achieve universal health coverage, working on health promotion and disease prevention within the life course approach and addressing all determinants of health and strengthening communities. The 2030 Agenda is important for Iceland and the first Voluntary National Review will be in New York this summer.

Finally, Mrs/Mr. President.

Iceland remains committed in contributing to the constructive efforts of WHO in improving Global Health and promoting Universal Health Coverage.

Thank you for your attention!