

Basel, 2 September 2019/TS

Agenda item 5(g) Accelerating Primary Health Care (PHC) in the WHO European Region

This statement by Medicus Mundi International is supported by the People's Health Movement.

We welcome the Regional Committee's commitment to strengthen Primary Health Care. However, we consider that the current vision presents several limitations.

In the Astana Declaration and other recent WHO documents, Primary Health Care is portrayed as a means to attain Universal Health Coverage. However, unlike Comprehensive Primary Health Care, Universal Health Coverage is silent on social determinants of health, and on community participation. It also falls short of asserting access to healthcare as an entitlement. Further, Universal Health Coverage does not adequately address the links between ill health and inequity, including commercial determinants of ill health driven by the power of transnational corporations.

Universal Health Coverage relies on partnerships with the private sector, including health insurance schemes and Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). We remind Member States that PPPs reduce accessibility and quality of care, while insurance-based models of Universal Health Coverage are often promoted at the expense of funding Public Health programmes. Their highly selective nature leaves many without the care they need.

As we approach the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage this month, it is crucial that WHO bodies take into account differences between Universal Health Coverage and Universal Health Care. Along with Comprehensive Primary Health Care, Universal Health Care represents the basis for fulfilling the human right to health. A selective version of Primary Health Care, as framed inside the Universal Health Coverage discourse, instead, keeps the door open for inequality in access and segmented models of service provision.

We call upon Member States to recall the original concept of Comprehensive Primary Health Care, and ensure that any agreed regional Accelerators, including those on digital health and other information-based technologies, contribute to Comprehensive Primary Health Care, rather than meeting the needs of a privileged minority.