6 April 2019 - Statement - Geneva - WHO was born on 7 April 1948 with a clear and ambitious vision: a world in which all people enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.

Although we have made enormous progress in recent years against some of the world's leading causes of death and disease, we still have a lot of work to do to realize that vision.

Today, half the world's population cannot access essential health services. Millions of women give birth without help from a skilled attendant; millions of children miss out on vaccinations against killer diseases, and millions suffer and die because they can't get treatment for HIV, TB, and malaria.

In 2019, this is simply unacceptable.

The good news is that there is a growing movement to address these inequalities.

Last October, we saw a momentous commitment to health for all in Kazakhstan with the signing of the historic Declaration of Astana on primary health care.

This was a key milestone. Strong and sustainable primary health care is the bedrock of universal health coverage, and the best defence against outbreaks and other health emergencies.

Although there will always be outbreaks and other disasters with health consequences, investing in stronger health systems can help to prevent or mitigate them.

In the Sustainable Development Goals, all countries have committed to achieving universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030. To meet that target, we need to see 1 billion people benefitting from UHC in the next 5 years.

This is not an unattainable dream, nor will it require billions of dollars to implement. UHC is achievable, right here, right now, for all of us.

Health for all is possible even with health systems that are less than perfect – countries at many different income levels are making progress with the resources they have.

On Friday 5 April, WHO colleagues joined hands with staff from health and development organizations around the world to symbolize our shared commitment to ensuring health for everyone, everywhere.

This shared commitment will be fundamental as we move forward to the next milestone in the global push towards universal health coverage – at the United Nations High-Level meeting on Universal Health Coverage in New York later this year.

At that meeting, world leaders will have the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to UHC to ensuring that every mother can give birth safely, that every child survives past its fifth birthday, and that no one dies simply because they are poor.

As we celebrate World Health Day, I pay tribute to health workers all over the world who are working to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable. I especially thank the dedicated personnel from WHO and our partners who are working around the clock in extreme circumstances, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Yemen.

https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/06-04-2019-statement-by-who-director-general-on-world-health-day-2019