BERLIN 16 October 2018 -- Eleven heads of the world's leading health and development organizations today signed a landmark commitment to find new ways of working together to accelerate progress towards achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Coordinated by the World Health Organization, the initiative unites the work of 11 organizations, with others set to join in the next phase.

The commitment follows a request from Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of Ghana, and Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway, with support from United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, to develop a global action plan to define how global actors can better collaborate to accelerate progress towards the health-related targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

"Healthy people are essential for sustainable development – to ending poverty, promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and protecting the environment. However, despite great strides made against many of the leading causes of death and disease, we must redouble our efforts or we will not reach several of the health-related targets," the organizations announced today at the World Health Summit in Berlin. "The Global Action Plan represents an historic commitment to new ways of working together to accelerate progress towards meeting the 2030 goals. We are committed to redefine how our organizations work together to deliver more effective and efficient support to countries and to achieve better health and well-being for all people."

The group has agreed to develop new ways of working together to maximize resources and measure progress in a more transparent and engaging way. The first phase of the plan's development is organized under three strategic approaches: align, accelerate and account.

Align: The organizations have committed to coordinate programmatic, financing and operational processes to increase collective efficiency and impact on a number of shared priorities such as gender equality and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.

Accelerate: They have agreed to develop common approaches and coordinate action in areas of work that have the potential to increase the pace of progress in global health. The initial set of seven "accelerators" include community and civil society engagement, research and development, data and sustainable financing.

Account: To improve transparency and accountability to countries and development partners, the health organizations are breaking new ground by setting common milestones for nearly 50 health-related targets across 14 Sustainable Development Goals. These milestones will provide a critical checkpoint and common reference to determine where the world stands in 2023 and whether it is on track to reach the 2030 goals.

The Global Action Plan will also enhance collective action and leverage funds to address

gender inequalities that act as barriers to accessing health, and to improve comprehensive quality health care for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services.

The organizations that have already signed up to the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All are: Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Financing Facility, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, Unitaid, UN Women, the World Bank and WHO. The World Food Programme has committed to join the plan in the coming months.

The final plan will be delivered in September 2019 at the United Nations General Assembly.