

Statement by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)
67th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the African Region

Agenda Item 13: Framework for health systems development towards universal health coverage in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in the African Region
([Document AFR/RC67/10](#))

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), a membership organisation representing 159 cancer organisations across the African Region.

We welcome the African Regional Office's framework for development to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), the aspiration of reaching the 80% targets by 2030 and the long term commitment to health systems strengthening which this represents. We applaud recognition of the importance of integrating services for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and wish to emphasise the critical role of palliative care in this context.

Cancer is now the second leading cause of death annually with 8.8 million deaths worldwide and should not be forgotten as one of the leading NCDs in Africa, accounting for over 455,000 deaths annually in 2021 and we know that the burden is set to rise in this region rapidly. We wish to underscore the current, enormous financial and social costs placed on families with costs of detection, diagnosis and treatment largely an out-of-pocket expense.

We applaud the robust scope of the framework and its alignment with the recommendations in the cancer resolution WHA 2017 and the associated cost-effective interventions for the early detection and treatment of cancer in appendix III of the global action plan on NCDs reviewed by the WHA 2017. We emphasise the critical role of data for effective public health policy development and the role of population based cancer registries in this regard. We welcome the attention to services at all health care levels and the emphasis on addressing the health workforce gap as these are critical to early detection, referral for diagnosis and treatment of cancer as well as management in the community for people living with cancer and other NCDs. We also welcome the underscoring of equity in access throughout and wish to take this opportunity to underscore the unique and pressing opportunity to significantly improve survival of children with cancer in Africa by inclusion in UHC.

Delegates, please do not forget that it was enormous projected cost of inaction on NCDs, which led to Heads of State commitments to act at the High Level Meeting in 2011. We urge that you recognise the actions in the cancer resolution as an investment in your national response to cancer in the face of the growing burden and as an imperative for UHC, which will show returns in health and economic terms by 2030.

¹ <http://gco.iarc.fr/today/fact-sheets-populations?population=991&sex=0#collapse2>

UICC would like to commend the Members of the African Region for the work thus far, and stands ready to support countries to reduce the burden of cancer through effective UHC.

