



Joint statement to the World Health Organization's 144th session
Provisional agenda item 5.5, EB144/14
Universal Health Coverage: Preparations for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage

This statement is delivered by World Cancer Research Fund International, supported by the International Coalition for Advocacy on Nutrition.

We welcome the reports on universal health coverage and commend the recognition of the need for a multisectoral approach to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Primary Health Care (PHC) and strongly encourage a greater focus on the specific pathways of health, especially the goal of ending malnutrition in all its forms.

Poor diets are the second-leading risk factor for deaths globally and are increasingly responsible for a rise in obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases.¹ Malnutrition is also responsible for nearly half of all under-five child deaths.²

In practice, good nutrition must be addressed within and outside of the health system. High-impact nutrition-specific interventions are delivered within the health sector as part of PHC including quality ante- and postnatal care, breastfeeding, nutrition, and hygiene counselling, and treatment of severe acute malnutrition. It is also important for the food system to support healthy populations and include policies that make nutritious and healthy food accessible, affordable, and safe, while also addressing commercial determinants of health.

Given the interconnected nature of health, food, and nutrition, we call on WHO and Member States to ensure that the UN high-level meeting (UN HLM) on UHC addresses broader determinants of health, especially malnutrition, as integral to achieving health for all. The UN HLM should invite concrete actions from Member States for a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to health and encourage commitments to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition as part of efforts to achieve UHC.

¹ GBD 2016 Risk Factors Collaborators. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990–2016: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *The Lancet*, 390(10100), 2017, pp. 1345–422.

² <https://data.unicef.org/topic/nutrition/malnutrition/>