United Nations Secretary-General’s Message

Secretary-General Spotlights Importance of Universal Health Coverage to Achieving Development Targets, in World Health Day Message

7 April 2019

This World Health Day focuses on universal health coverage and the crucial role primary health care plays in making such coverage a reality. Half the world’s population is still unable to obtain the essential health services they need. Universal health coverage is about changing this and ensuring equitable access to health services for all, without people experiencing financial hardship as a result.

This is central to building healthy societies and economies and to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. And it is not just about improving health services. It is about policies and action across many sectors. We need to address the broader determinants of health, including social, economic and environmental factors.

And we must invest in people. We need highly trained and skilled health workers who can educate and advocate for their patients. We need empowered individuals who know how to take care of their health and that of their families. And we need communities to have access to health care when and where they need it. We must also highlight the importance of mental health, so often stigmatized and forgotten.

Primary health care is the key to achieving these goals and universal health coverage. Last year’s Declaration of Astana on Primary Health Care has paved the way for the world to prioritize the investments we need. Now it is time to implement the commitments made.
Health is a human right. Political commitment and partnerships will be crucial in bringing it to life. Let us show the world that we are ready to bridge the gaps in health-care coverage worldwide and deliver health for all.

— António Guterres

United Nations
Secretary-General's Message

International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda
7 April 2019

“This year marks the 25th anniversary of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, one of the darkest chapters in recent human history. More than 800,000 people – overwhelmingly Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu and others who opposed the genocide – were systematically killed in less than three months. On this Day, we honour those who were murdered and reflect on the suffering and resilience of those who survived.

As we renew our resolve to prevent such atrocities from ever happening again, we are seeing dangerous trends of rising xenophobia, racism and intolerance in many parts of the world. Particularly troubling is the
proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence. They are an affront to our values, and threaten human rights, social stability and peace. Wherever they occur, hate speech and incitement to violence should be identified, confronted and stopped to prevent them leading, as they have in the past, to hate crimes and genocide.

I call on all political, religious and civil society leaders to reject hate speech and discrimination, and to work vigorously to address and mitigate the root causes that undermine social cohesion and create conditions for hatred and intolerance.

The capacity for evil resides in all our societies, but so, too, do the qualities of understanding, kindness, justice and reconciliation. Let us work together to build a harmonious future for all. This is the best way to honour those who lost their lives so tragically in Rwanda 25 years ago.”

— António Guterres

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