

UHC フォーラム 2017

2017 年 12 月 13 日 9:00～10:00 於：東京プリンスホテル

加藤厚労大臣 開会挨拶

1. Introduction

- Honorable Ministers, Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,
- On behalf of the Government of Japan and the co-organizers, I would like to extend our warmest welcome to Japan at this UHC Forum 2017.
- Since we met at the 2015 UHC Tokyo Meeting, Japan has been spearheading global efforts towards UHC, through the G7 Iseshima Summit, G7 Kobe Health Ministers Meeting, and TICAD VI in Nairobi, Kenya. It is an honor for me to open this UHC Forum as Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan, always a staunch advocate for UHC both domestically and internationally.

- I am pleased to note that this Forum has now attracted not only Health Ministers, but other high-level participants, including Heads of State, Finance Ministers, and representatives from international organisations, NGOs, and private sectors. Each of us has an important role to play in our collective endeavour towards achieving UHC.

2. Importance of UHC

- People's health is the foundation of peace and life. Next year, 2018, marks the 40th anniversary of the Alma-Ata Declaration, which made "Health for All" a global agenda. Ever since, public health has been promoted in each country, by mobilizing domestic resources and engaging local communities. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also proved effective in reducing three major infectious diseases, as well as infant and maternal mortality rates.

- At the same time, it was increasingly recognized that these disease-based measures alone were not enough to strengthen health systems as a whole, which are the critical foundation for providing a wide range of health services to all. Thus, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have placed Universal Health Coverage at its core, reaffirming the importance of robust health systems.
- In this context, while external donor funding has often made important contributions in developing countries, each government must take ownership and lead nationwide efforts to establish a health system that is financially sustainable in the long term. Also, when we look at each individual, past experiences taught us that designing a robust health financing mechanism that protects vulnerable people from financial hardship, as well as developing healthcare facilities and workforce including doctors to provide necessary health services wherever people live, are critically important in achieving “Health for All”.

- Therefore, UHC, which signifies a state in which “all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship” is one of the most important targets to reach by 2030.

3. Introduction of Japanese Case in Achieving UHC

- As you may know, Japan achieved UHC in 1961, when it was still in the early stages of post-war economic development. In its process, a strong political leadership was crucial, together with the wisdom of many experts, to expand the public health insurance scheme and nationwide deployment of medical schools, both of which were vital in achieving UHC.
- The Japanese public health insurance program has its root in employees’ insurance of large corporations, and smaller companies gradually followed and introduced the same scheme. At that stage, the government was faced with the issue of how to cover self-employed individuals,

including poorer farmers. Japan's answer to this question in 1961 was a "no one left behind" approach, that is, to provide public health insurance to cover all remaining citizens.

- Also, in order to strengthen human resource development and provision of health care at the local level, the government launched the "one prefecture one medical school initiative" in 1973.
- These bold initiatives sparked major political debates in Japan. Against this background, they were approved as Cabinet decisions and implemented by the government as a whole. Not only the Ministry of Health, but also the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education took an active role in this process. I firmly believe that these early-stage investments for UHC by the whole government were an important enabling factor in Japan's rapid economic development later on.

4. Japanese Efforts in Maintaining UHC and the Importance of Forums in Sharing Experience

- Based on our experiences, my next point is that maintaining UHC after achieving it is a very important task as well.
- Japan has maintained UHC through a number of system-wide reforms and legislation, adapting to population aging and economic conditions.
- In this continuous reform process, the Japanese government has always been keen to learn about the experiences of other countries. For example, we learned from Germany and our public health insurance and long-term care insurance for the elderly were built on their experiences.
- Likewise, if Japan's UHC experiences are helpful for other countries, we are more than willing to cooperate and share our successes as well as failures.

- I strongly hope that this forum will serve as the best platform for sharing the experiences and practices of each country.

5. Brief Introduction of Forum and Expectations for Development

- Finally, I would like to briefly introduce the overview of this forum.
- Today, we will first hear from leading global experts on the current status of UHC. At the breakout sessions, we will discuss various topics including financing, community-based approaches, and aging policies. We will then talk about further cooperation through a variety of initiatives for promoting UHC.
- Tomorrow, we will invite Heads of State, Health and Finance Ministers, and leaders of international and civil organisations for a higher-level debate. We will also share each country's experience and visions, and discuss future collaboration across countries and other partners.

- I sincerely hope that we will have candid and fruitful discussions, contributing to the health of all people in the world. Thank you very much for your attention.