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A look back at history shows us that global threats and crises that challenge multiple aspects of health.

And there is good reason to believe that now is the time to set ourselves upon that path.

Governments can also honour their commitments to equitable access and make space for multilateral efforts to facilitate and accelerate equitable access to products. This will help to ensure that we are not losing ground in the fight against preventable diseases at a time when we cannot afford to.

I greatly fear that the pandemic’s impact on children’s health is only starting to be seen.

Here are some of the most urgent choices we could make to address these problems:

- Governments need to step up vaccination efforts to ensure equitable access to vaccines, especially in vulnerable communities.
- There is a critical need for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines so that countries can sustain critical services and systems for children.
- We need to ensure that community health systems are strong enough to withstand new waves of the virus.
- There is a need for equitable distribution of vaccines.
- We must act to reach more people with vaccines. This will keep people safe AND help to bring down death rates.

But even more fundamentally, we have learned that the underlying strength of the health system is crucial.

For vaccines to protect the majority of people around the world before the end of next year.

Most of these 23 million, 17 million of them did not receive any vaccines at all. These are the so-called zero-dose children, most of whom live in communities with multiple deprivations.

Today, almost 7 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered, less than a year since the first vaccine was approved. And we are now on track to produce enough doses by the end of 2022 to reach everyone everywhere if we choose to act to reach more people with vaccines. This will keep people safe AND help to bring down death rates.

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As we gather here today, let us act – with unity and with determination – to write a new chapter in the fight against preventable diseases.