

M8 Alliance Statement Beyond Silos

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Action on global health, universal health coverage, and climate cannot be separated

This year the World Health Summit is taking place as we celebrate the 250th birthday of Alexander von Humboldt, a great German scientist and explorer who sought to unify diverse branches of scientific knowledge. He was the first person to describe the phenomenon and the causes of human-induced climate change and the necessity of a holistic view on our cosmos.

2019 saw a range of important political steps towards the strengthening of global health. Two high level meetings at the United Nations General Assembly – one on Climate Change and one on universal health coverage – reiterated the need for bold global health action. The G7 and the G20 both reinforced the need to invest in health – with the G7 leading the replenishment of the GFATM and the G20 organizing the first joint meeting between health and finance ministers. Gender equity gained increasing attention and political support – but sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as the health of refugees and migrants continue to split the international community. The rise of populism has led to reduced support for UN organizations and the distrust of governments is complemented by a distrust of experts – also in health. The World Health Summit will continue to be a strong voice for multilateralism, science and equity. True to Alexander von Humboldt’s principles it sends a strong message that all stakeholders need to cooperate across nations and sectors to integrate and apply scientific knowledge to ensure a healthier and safer world and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Three issues have been prioritized at the World Health Summit:

1 | Climate change is one of the defining issues of our time. It is also one of the world’s most urgent health threats. The health of people is directly affected by climate change.

For example, 7 million people die every year of conditions related to air pollution. How global health can contribute to tackling the health impacts of climate change and help to identify solutions was one of the key issues discussed at the 2019 World Health Summit. Special focus was given to the two health commitments from the U.N. Climate Action Summit: to save lives by cutting carbon emissions and cleaning our air; and boosting investments in climate action, public health and sustainable development since low-income countries will have most difficulty adapting to climate change and related health hazards.

The M8 call for concrete actions from governments, investors, development banks and funds, bilateral agencies, NGOs and the private sector and joins the voice of young people all over the world who are challenging politicians to respond to science and implement determined policies. It calls on health professionals to act by tackling non-communicable diseases and climate change by promoting healthy food and agriculture and cities that are pedestrian friendly; by addressing the substantial carbon emissions of the health sector and by advocating for divestment from fossil fuel and tobacco.

2 | Universal health coverage (UHC) will be key to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. But currently, at least half of the people in the world do not receive the health services they need.

About 100 million people are pushed into extreme poverty each year because of out-of-pocket spending on health. This pressing global health issue was addressed in September 2019 by world leaders in the most comprehensive set of health commitments ever adopted at this level. The high-level United Nations Political Declaration on universal health coverage (UHC) is a commitment that aims for all people to have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. This includes the full range of essential health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care.

The M8 call for determined political action to implement the commitments made specially to ensure equity in UHC so that no one suffers financial hardship because they have had to pay for healthcare and access to medicines out of their own pockets. The M8 considers primary health care as the cornerstone of UHC and recognizes the fundamental importance of input and co-ownership from and by people, communities, and civil society for their achievement. In addition to the HLM political declaration the M8 underlines that access to health services for refugees and migrants as agreed in the global compact for migration is essential and that gender equality and women's rights (including SRHR) are foundational principles for UHC.

3 | Digital transformation is changing health and health services in a profound way at rapid speed integrating digital technology in all aspects of health and care, but with great inequalities between countries and population groups.

A flow of data ranging from health care records and contextual information, to wearables to the Internet of Things is transforming the interaction of patients, health care teams and organizations independent of time and place. Deep learning and artificial intelligence can support communication, diagnosis, image analysis, nursing, surgery and workflow. The current and future convergence of big health data—from personal, clinical, and environmental—combined with artificial intelligence (AI) offers unprecedented opportunities for public health. It also requires new ways to protect populations against the increasingly sophisticated collection and misuse of personal data. Applying these developments to address the health needs of LMIC in the context of UHC and primary health care must be a priority. The purpose of digital health must be to promote healthy lives and wellbeing for everyone, everywhere, at all ages.

The M8 welcome the development of a digital health strategy by the WHO as global cooperation is critical. It underlines that digital health must be people not technology driven

and must be a means of promoting equitable, affordable and universal access to health for all, including the special needs of groups that are vulnerable in the context of digital health. It sees the need for robust ethical guidelines for AI to counteract loss of privacy and inappropriate surveillance and the need for international, evidence based, standards of practice. It calls for a global regulatory environment for health data to become a global public good to counteract the use of health data for commercial gain, and in the worst case, for malicious purposes.

Two very special events at the World Health Summit 2019 deserve to be highlighted:

The M8 is honoured that on the occasion of the World Health Summit 2019, the Director-General of the WHO has agreed to become a patron of the World Health Summit and has signed a MoU with the Charité to take the global health agenda forward together with a special reference to the implementation of the Global Action Plan on Health and Wellbeing. This follows on the first reiteration of this action plan presented on occasion of the 10th anniversary of the World Health Summit.

The World Health Summit International Presidency was passed from Tehran University of Medical Sciences (TUMS) to Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. This means that for the first time a World Health Summit Regional Meeting will take place in Africa in April 2020. During the World Health Summit 2019, a range of program contributions will contribute to the preparation of the regional summit and its focus on African achievements and challenges.

The rich discussions at the World Health Summit 2019 between ministers, foundations, academia, private sector and civil society reinforce the role of the World Health Summit as a meeting place that makes a difference.

1 | Commitment to Support the SDG 3 Action Plan for Health and Wellbeing

The M8 Alliance and the World Health Summit will continue to work as strong partners to international health organizations to support the implementation of the SDG action plan and its orientation to accelerate, align and account for actions in global health. The M8 is honored that principles and representatives of many of the 12 signatories regularly attend the World Health Summit and contribute to the discussions in implementation.

In close cooperation with global partners the M8 Alliance will support the implementation of the Action Plan accelerators at country level and continue to provide the World Health Summit as a platform to focus on strategies for implementation and discuss progress.

2 | Commitment to support the implementation of universal health coverage

The M8 Alliance has regularly called for investment in Universal Health Coverage – including mental health - as the corner stone of global health and SDG3. While it will be important to focus its contributions on the agreements reached in the HLM political declaration it has a special responsibility to take on the issues that were too divisive to make it into the declaration such as SRHR. The World Health Summit reinforces the right to health of migrants and other vulnerable groups and continues to highlight the need of these groups in its program.

The M8 calls on the next G7 and G20 summits - in the United States and Saudi Arabia respectively - to continue to prioritize investments in Universal Health Coverage and access to medicines in support of the implementation of the 2030 agenda. This includes investing in the digital transformation of health systems and investing in the global health workforce. Given the priority of financing UHC the meetings between health and finance ministers initiated by Japan should be continued to strengthen public financing of UHC. It also calls on the European Commission and the upcoming EU presidencies to strengthen UHC and investments in global health innovation and financing.

3 | Commitment to a global health agenda that builds on the right to health

All work of the M8 is grounded in the values of health equity, human rights, gender equity and global cooperation. The M8 has underlined that a health in all policies approach and a better understanding of the social, environmental and commercial determinants of health supports this orientation. The SDGs can only be implemented based on such an orientation, which is reflected in SDG16 with its focus on peaceful and inclusive societies and complemented by SDG 17 on partnerships.

As wars rage around the globe and the world in general has become a more unstable place the M8 calls on all stakeholders to engage for the achievement of SDG16 with its focus on peace, rule of law and accountable institutions. The health of women and girls, in particular gender-based violence must be addressed if the SDGs are to be achieved. The use of rape in conflicts is unacceptable and victims must have access to sexual and reproductive health services.

4 | Commitment to ensure global health security

The world continues to be challenged by serious disease outbreaks as well as the ongoing challenge of AMR. The ongoing Ebola outbreak in DRC underlines the connection between outbreaks and weak governance and health institutions. The recent report of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board underlines that the world is not ready should there be a major outbreak. The M8 recognizes the extraordinary work done by the WHO in this context but deplores the lack of commitment of member states to fully finance WHO emergencies activities, especially the contingency fund for health emergencies.

The M8 Alliance calls on decision makers to strengthen their investment in health security – with preparedness as an integral dimension of UHC – and the implementation of the IHR. We welcome the increasing effort made through innovation and research to be able to prevent outbreaks through vaccine development, improved diagnostics and treatment. The ONEHEALTH approach continues to be a guide for intersectoral and interdisciplinary action.

5 | Commitment to investing in science and technology

The partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Grand Challenges for the World Health Summit in 2018 highlighted the need to step up vaccine research and development. The M8 Alliance notes the progress achieved, for example in the development of an Ebola vaccine. This year's World Health Summit has also drawn attention to the need to invest in the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer or dementia. Affordable services and treatments will be critical for LMICs.

The M8 Alliance reinforces its call to research and development organisations to support institution and capacity building in the global South through strong cooperation networks. It also highlights the need for more implementation and social science research. It calls on the European Commission to be a leader in global health research and innovation.

6 | Commitment to address violence and sexual exploitation as a public health issue

Violence in its many forms is challenging societies and has great public health impact - this includes war, civil war, gun violence, and domestic violence. Sexual exploitation is gaining increasing attention and needs to be seen through a public health perspective, taking into account both the physical and mental trauma that is associated, especially when the victims are minors. Gender based violence and stigmatization of LGBTQ need to be addressed.

The M8 will continue to address violence as a threat to public health and calls on public health agencies to cooperate across society and with affected groups and victims.

7 | Commitment to SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”

Together with the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), the M8 Alliance has launched the initiative “Respect and Dialogue” to give science a stronger voice and take more responsibility against the backdrop of growing populism, violent extremism, conflicts and suffering worldwide.

SDG 3 (“Good Health and Well-Being”) is a specific and uniquely effective entry point for all other SDGs because health and wellbeing of the people is relevant for each of the 17 SDGs. e.g. no poverty, zero hunger, clean water, affordable and clean energy, climate and healthier cities. Health is also a human right and of major personal concern for every individual person and for society at large. Health is therefore an excellent common basis and more easily agreed on in diverse and controversial discussions on other, more disputed issues within and also beyond the scope of the SDG.

The overall goal of the initiative “Respect and Dialogue” is to create a novel forum which embraces a holistic view of the Sustainable Development Goals as its guide. The InterAcademy Partnership (IAP), the umbrella organization of all 130 Academies of Medicine, Sciences and Humanities, member of the M8 Alliance, will engage with world-wide partners to organize novel formats to promote enlightened respectful, peaceful dialogues in order to promote peace and justice world-wide.

The M8 Alliance renews its full commitment to support goal 3 of the SDGs which aims to: “Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.” We call on heads of state and government to invest in people and to ensure that no one is left behind.

The M8 Alliance commits to the transformative approach of the Sustainable Development Goals SDGs. We call on politicians to make the political choice for health.

About the World Health Summit

The World Health Summit is one of the world's leading strategic forums for global health. In 2019, 300 speakers and 2,500 participants from 100 countries took part, including almost 20 ministers from around the world and the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). World Health Summit speakers are leading experts from science, politics, business, and civil society.

The World Health Summit was founded 2009 on the 300th anniversary of Charité, Europe's largest university hospital, and is held under the patronage of Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

About the M8 Alliance

The M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centers, Universities and National Academies is the academic network behind the World Health Summit. The network consists of 28 members in 19 countries, including the InterAcademy Partnership, which represents the national academies of medicine and science in 130 countries.

The M8 Alliance was initiated by Charité in 2009 on the occasion of the first World Health Summit with the goal of improving health worldwide. It is an international association of excellent universities, research institutions, and medical branches of national academies of science. At the end of each World Health Summit in October, the M8 Alliance issues recommendations for action to international policymakers in the form of the M8 Declaration.

The International Presidency of the World Health Summit rotates annually among members of the M8 Alliance. The M8 also organizes annual Regional Meetings, regular expert meetings, and summer schools. The next World Health Summit Regional Meeting will take place in Uganda in April, 2020.