

Joint Declaration of the UHC High-Level Forum 2025

1. Importance of UHC

- We—the Japanese Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the World Bank Group (WBG), and the World Health Organization (WHO)—convened the first UHC High-Level Forum (the Forum) in Tokyo on December 6, 2025, and reaffirmed our shared commitment to progressing towards universal health coverage (UHC).
- UHC means that all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship. It is set out in Target 3.8 under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Achieving UHC is essential not only from a human rights and equity perspective; it also underpins inclusive and sustainable economic growth by supporting a healthy and productive workforce, and contributes to better educational outcomes, poverty eradication, stronger social protection and equality for all—critical foundations for human development.
- Japan achieved UHC through universal health insurance coverage in 1961—which contributed to social stability and rapid economic growth—and strengthened the health financing system through finance-health collaboration. Japan’s experience demonstrates the value of such collaboration as well as the importance of promoting UHC at an early stage of economic development.
- The Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 served as sharp reminders that UHC is also essential for health system resilience and public health emergency preparedness.

2. Finance-Health Collaboration

- To achieve UHC, countries need to improve the quality of health services and protect people from excessive financial burdens by strengthening health financing systems.
- However, as highlighted in the UHC Global Monitoring Report, significant challenges remain. In 2023, 4.6 billion people still lacked essential health services, and in 2022, 2.1 billion experienced financial hardship due to out-of-pocket health spending with the poorest and most vulnerable disproportionately affected. Strengthening health financing systems is an urgent priority to address these gaps.
- In this regard, close collaboration between finance and health authorities is instrumental in mobilizing domestic resources and ensuring the efficient use of funds through robust public financial management. Domestic resources—such as taxes and insurance premiums—should serve as the primary source of financing for health systems. Cost-effective, equitable, and sustainable health systems should be established while strategically leveraging the private sector in support of UHC.
- Over many years, Japan has actively promoted collaboration between finance and health authorities. In 2019, as G20 Presidency, Japan convened the first-ever Joint Finance and Health Ministerial Session and formulated the ‘G20 Shared Understanding on the Importance of UHC Financing in Developing Countries.’ Furthermore, in 2023, following the COVID-19 pandemic, Japan, as G7 Presidency, convened the Joint Finance and Health Ministerial Session and reaffirmed the shared understanding that, in addition to enhancing finance-health coordination, establishing rapid and effective financing mechanisms is essential for pandemic response.
- The establishment of the UHC Knowledge Hub (the Hub) and the convening of the Forum— through the partnership of MoF, MHLW, WBG, and WHO together with participating countries and diverse partners— mark a new milestone in strengthening finance-health collaboration.

3. Country-Level National Actions

- Given recent changes in the global health landscape, including fiscal constraints in advanced economies and increasingly complex multilateral cooperation, the importance of transitioning toward more country-led and self-reliant health systems has grown significantly.
- In this context, we welcome the commitment by twenty-one countries to develop National Health Compacts. Moreover, we applaud the participating countries that announced their National Health Compacts at the Forum.

- National Health Compacts, developed through country-led processes, represent policy commitments by the governments of low- and middle-income countries. These compacts outline how countries will strengthen primary health care by using digital technology and working with both public and private health providers. The compacts support five solutions to achieve comprehensive primary health care—investing in functional health facilities, diversifying service delivery across clinics, homes, and digital platforms, embedding preventive services, upskilling the health workforce, and removing financial barriers to access.
- We expect that their formulation and implementation will help build equitable and sustainable health financing systems, contributing to the WBG’s target of reaching 1.5 billion people with quality, affordable health services. These efforts also promote progress towards the SDGs target on UHC.
- Strong national ownership should be complemented by effective collaboration with global, regional, and local partners. The private sector should also contribute essential resources, innovation, and service delivery capacity that can significantly expand access and improve quality of care. In this context, fostering a well-regulated, accountable, and inclusive public–private collaboration is indispensable for sustainable progress toward UHC.

4. UHC Knowledge Hub

- To implement the country-led initiatives, it is essential to strengthen the capacities of the finance and health authorities responsible for their execution. To this end, we have established the Hub in Tokyo. Today, together with leaders from key countries and organizations committed to advancing UHC, we officially launched the Hub.
- The Hub serves as a platform to strengthen the leadership skills and capacities that finance and health authorities need to translate their countries’ commitments to achieving UHC into action. It provides capacity-building on health financing for senior officials from finance and health ministries of developing countries, thereby supporting the effective formulation and implementation of health financing policies. The training programs are co-designed with participating countries, emphasizing country ownership and country-specific needs.
- We welcome the participation of eight countries in the inaugural training program: Cambodia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, and the Philippines, and look forward to engaging with other countries in the future. The Hub will collaborate, when relevant, with Regional Development Banks (RDBs), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the private sector, philanthropic organizations, civil society, academia, and other relevant stakeholders such as the Prince Mahidol Award Conference (PMAC), to support participating countries in implementing health financing policies, including by technical and financial assistance.
- The Hub will also serve as a key driver for advocacy to strengthen political momentum toward achieving UHC. The convening of this Forum represents one of the key efforts in this regard. The Hub will play an important role in Global Health Architecture, combining advocacy, training programs, and implementation support.

5. Way forward

- UHC is a cornerstone of the SDGs. In view of the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on UHC to be held in 2027 among other relevant meetings, the Forum will play a pivotal role in shaping global discussions on the Post-2030 Agenda.
- The Forum will serve as a platform to review progress on the Hub and to identify ways to improve its activities. In addition, it will provide guidance and support for the implementation of the country-led initiatives such as National Health Compacts, supporting efforts such as the WBG’s health target. Furthermore, the Forum will foster collaboration across diverse stakeholders.
- We will convene the UHC High-Level Forum in Tokyo regularly to assess progress and sustain momentum toward achieving UHC.

END