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Global health and foreign policy

Letter dated 26 October 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Georgia, Japan and Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

The permanent missions of Georgia, Japan, and Thailand to the United Nations in New York, as the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage and Global Health, have the honour to transmit a joint statement in support of the Secretary-General's policy brief on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and universal health coverage on behalf of 120 co-sponsors (see annex).

We express our support to the policy brief, which emphasizes the role of universal health coverage in addressing the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and provides key recommendations on how countries can build back better with more resilience and preparedness to cope with future crises. The large number of co-sponsors reaffirms our collective commitment to the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage, especially in the current circumstances, where access to health care and essential services is more pertinent than ever before. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you under your continued and able leadership on universal health coverage at the United Nations to build a healthier world for all.

In this connection, we would kindly request that the present letter and its annex be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 131.

(Signed) Kaha **Imnadze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

(Signed) **Ishikane** Kimihiro
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

(Signed) Vitavas **Srivihok**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 26 October 2020 from the Permanent Representatives of Georgia, Japan and Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly

Joint statement in support of the Secretary-General's policy brief on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and universal health coverage

1. In less than a year since the adoption of the Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage on 23 September 2019, the world is facing the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), an unprecedented challenge to global health, which poses a threat to human security. We therefore welcome the release of the United Nations Secretary-General's policy brief entitled "COVID-19 and universal health coverage" which emphasizes the role of universal health coverage in addressing the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and provides key recommendations on how countries can build back better with more resilience and preparedness to cope with future crises.
2. We are deeply concerned that at least half of the world's population still lack access to essential health services and that, with exacerbating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, more people will be driven into poverty, particularly those living in low- and middle-income countries.
3. We reiterate the need to strengthen health systems to ensure access to health care and essential services for all without undue financial hardship, including for those who are vulnerable or marginalized who are most at risk. Greater policy coherence and coordinated actions through whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches are required to realize the right of every human being to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. We stress the critical importance of the universal provision of COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines, once available, to effectively alleviate and control the spread of the pandemic.
4. We call for continued financing and investment to strengthen health systems to achieve universal health coverage, to strengthen health emergency preparedness and response, and to support health promotion.
5. We must seize the opportunity of recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic to build back better, strengthen resilience and preparedness, and accelerate the implementation of the health-related goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as we enter the decade of action to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals.
6. We acknowledge the key leadership role of the World Health Organization and the fundamental role of the United Nations system in catalysing and coordinating the comprehensive global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also express our appreciation to health workers and other front-line workers at the forefront of the COVID-19 response around the world.
7. We reaffirm our commitment to the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage and recognize the urgency to accelerate actions in order to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. We will continue moving forward together to scale up the global effort to leave no one's health behind and to build a healthier world for all.

List of co-sponsors of the joint statement in support of the Secretary-General's policy brief on COVID-19 and universal health coverage

1. Afghanistan
2. Angola
3. Antigua and Barbuda
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13. Bulgaria
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