



Treatment Action Group

High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage – TAG Statement

Treatment Action Group is an independent, activist, and community-based research and policy think tank committed to ending the HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C virus pandemics.

The UHC declaration highlights the need to fund a holistic approach to health care that addresses critical diseases such as HIV and TB in the primary care system. And further recognizes the importance of domestic investment in health to support the long-term sustainability of UHC.

Unfortunately, the declaration falls short of calling for the adoption of new and **specific** mechanisms to generate domestic funding for health systems and eliminate predatory loan schemes that drive up sovereign debt at the expense of domestic investment in all SDGs.

Between 2020 and 2021, developing nations paid US\$649 billion in debt servicing to external public creditors alone, including other sovereign states and multilateral development banks. A value that exceeds the estimated 400 billion dollars required to meet the SDG for health by 2030 in low and middle income countries.

The money paid to debt servicing is nearly 20 times what is needed to meet the SDG for TB alone. Money that could provide access to TB diagnostics, treatment, and prevention 10 times over is instead going into the pockets of lenders.

Debt poses one of the greatest challenges to achieving UHC and undermines the right to health and the right to science everywhere.

Our current system of financing UHC through loans that prioritize debt servicing over health **actively hinders** the realization of UHC and **entrenches** longstanding global inequities that allow wealthy nations to profit off of lower income nations.

The importance of reformed and restructured global governance of debt and financing in upholding basic human rights **cannot be overstated**. COVID-19 **laid bare** the effects of

years of underinvestment in public health and underscored the urgency of building **universal, functional, and well-funded** health systems

TAG urges member states to push the boundaries of the status quo, look beyond the text of the political declaration, and commit to developing financing mechanisms at the national and global levels that allow for robust investment in health and health systems. We must **prioritize funding systems that reject austerity and divestment, and prioritizes ongoing investment in UHC, the SDGs, and human rights over creditor returns.**