ESMO Statement
UN High-Level Event on Universal Health Coverage: Multi-Stakeholder Hearing
29 April 2019, New York, USA

The European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) is a global network of over 20,000 oncologists from more than 150 countries. We support Universal Health Coverage (UHC) because health is a human right, not a privilege, and no cancer patient should be left behind without affordable quality cancer and palliative care services.

Cancer causes 1 in 6 deaths globally. We should focus on preventing the 30-40% of cancers that are preventable, and build up workforce and treatment capacity for the millions of people whose cancers are not preventable.

Therefore, we request the UN Political Declaration state “Country governments must guarantee their entire population Universal Health Coverage benefit packages that ensure financial protection, and include a core set of comprehensive, safe, affordable, effective and high-quality services for prevention, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care of all NCDs, including cancer, delivered by an adequate, and well-trained workforce.”

This will reduce cancer deaths by:
- Promoting prevention and enabling early, accurate diagnosis
- Securing timely access to affordable quality treatment
- Providing survivorship care
- Ensuring palliative care, including opioids for pain control

This requires:
- Strengthening of primary care for early diagnosis, screening, and supportive and palliative care
- Referral services across the continuum of care to ensure timely access to secondary and tertiary facilities where cancer treatment is received
- Making population-based disease registries mandatory, ensuring they include the comprehensive incidence, relapse (crucial for advanced/metastatic cancers) and mortality data required for evidence-based healthcare planning, measuring national health policy effectiveness, and demonstrating the number of lives saved

ESMO is committed to sharing its expertise to support making Universal Health Coverage a reality and positively affecting the health and life of everyone.