



**ESMO Statement for the
World Health Assembly, 20-28 May 2019, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Agenda Item 11.5: Universal Health Coverage -
Preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly
on universal health coverage**

Honourable Chair, Esteemed Delegates,

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 access to affordable quality cancer and palliative care services.

Cancer causes 1 in 6 deaths globally, yet 1 in 2 people worldwide have no access to essential health services, and many countries do not include cancer and palliative care services in their UHC benefit packages.

Therefore, we urge WHO and Member States to ensure the UN Political Declaration on UHC specifically states: **Country governments must guarantee their entire population 'UHC benefit packages' that ensure financial protection, and include a core set of comprehensive, safe, affordable, effective and high-quality health services for the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care of noncommunicable diseases, including cancer, delivered by an adequate, and well-trained workforce.**

This would contribute to reducing cancer deaths worldwide, yield broad economic gains, and provide societal benefits. It requires:

- Extensive prevention programs.
- Strengthening primary healthcare for early diagnosis, screening, supportive and palliative care, including opioids for pain control.
- Robust referral services across the entire continuum of healthcare to ensure timely access to secondary and tertiary facilities where cancer treatment is provided.
- Building up workforce and treatment capacity for the millions of people who have no access to cancer care, because many cancer cases have a high chance of cure if detected on time and adequately treated.*
- Making population-based disease registries mandatory for evidence-based healthcare planning, measuring national health policy effectiveness, and demonstrating the number of lives saved.

ESMO is committed to sharing its expertise in cancer management to help make Universal Health Coverage a reality and promote healthier lives for everyone everywhere.

Thank you.

*<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer>