22 May 2019 - Delegates at the World Health Assembly today agreed three resolutions on universal health coverage (UHC). They focus on: primary healthcare, the role of community health workers, and the September UN General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC.

Primary health care towards universal health coverage

The first resolution requires Member States to take measures to implement the Declaration of Astana, adopted at the 2018 Global Conference on Primary Health Care.

It recognizes the key role strong primary health care plays in ensuring countries can provide the full range of health services a person needs throughout their life – be it disease prevention or treatment, rehabilitation or palliative care. Primary health care means countries must have quality, integrated health systems, empowered individuals and communities, and that they must involve a wide range of sectors in addressing social, economic, and environmental determinants of health.

The resolution calls on the WHO secretariat to increase its support to Member States in this area. WHO is also required to finalize its Primary Health Care Operational Framework in time for next year's World Health Assembly. WHO and other stakeholders are tasked with supporting countries in implementing the Declaration of Astana and mobilizing resources to build strong and sustainable primary health care.

Community health workers delivering primary health care

The second resolution recognizes the contribution made by community health workers to achieving universal health coverage, responding to health emergencies, and promoting healthier populations. It urges countries and partners to use WHO's guideline on health policy and system support to optimize community health worker programme, and to allocate adequate resources. At the same time, the WHO Secretariat is requested to collect and evaluate data, monitor implementation of the guideline, and provide support to Member States.

Community health workers have a key role to play in delivering primary health care – they speak local languages and have the trust of local people. They need to be well trained, effectively supervised, and properly recognized for the work they do, as part of multi-disciplinary teams. Investing in community healthworkers generates important employment opportunities, especially for women.

Universal health coverage high-level meeting

The final UHC resolution endorsed by delegates supports preparation for the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on universal health coverage in September 2019. The resolution calls on Member States to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage with a focus on poor, vulnerable and marginalized individuals and groups. The UN high-level meeting will call for the involvement of governments in coordinating the work required across all sectors to

achieve universal health coverage. Delegates identified key priorities such as health financing, building sustainable and resilient people-centred health systems, and strengthening health workforces. They also emphasized the importance of investing in and strengthening primary