



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THAILAND
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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Opening Remarks

by

H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai

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**at the 3rd Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of
Universal Health Coverage and Global Health**

21 September 2022,

Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations, New York

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. I am pleased to welcome you to the Permanent Mission of Thailand for the **3rd Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage and Global Health**. Our sincere appreciation goes to our co-chair--**Georgia and Japan** and other members of the Group of Friends namely the **World Health Organization, UHC2030, IFRC** and the **UN Foundation**. And we thank all **distinguished panelists** for being with us here today.

2. The objective of this meeting is two-fold—to take stock of the progress made to-date towards realizing the social protection for all under the **UN Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda (OCA)** AND to find ways to make UHC more available as well as capable of coping with new global health challenges such as aging population and emerging diseases.

3. As our colleagues from WHO would attest, at present, more than half of the world’s population still do not have access to the health care they need, and every year more than 100 million people worldwide are driven into poverty because of the out-of-pocket health spending. At the same time, countries with UHC are finding it more difficult to financially sustain the health care schemes they have in place. These are the reasons that make our job more daunting.

4. Meanwhile, the international community are rallying to **rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** as a central component of multilateral cooperation. In so doing, it is important to focus on how to **make health for all a sustainable future for human security**.

5. Thailand underscores the **importance of investing in UHC as the foundation of strong and resilient health systems**. This preemptive investment is a **cost-effective social protection measure**. It would ensure that people, especially those most vulnerable, who access health services are not exposed to financial hardship.

6. From our individual and collective experiences in tackling COVID-19, it is crystal clear that **global health challenges** can disrupt decades of development efforts and even reverse years of development gains.

7. I would also like to emphasize the importance of improving primary health care to address the health needs of at the community level by integrating together the care, prevention, promotion and education. Primary health care improves the performance of health systems by lowering overall health care expenditure while improving population health and access. To achieve universal health coverage, reforms should focus on strengthening primary health care to ensure equity and cost containment.

8. Thailand strongly believes in the **empowerment of communities** and **social participation** in primary health care, such as our successful example of the **Village Health Volunteers Program**. We also train migrant workers to perform these volunteer tasks for their peers. That was how we managed to efficiently contain the spread of COVID-19 in a cost-effective manner.

9. We would also like to stress the important role of **prevention and healthy life-style promotion** to make UHC sustainable.

10. This year, Thailand will become an integral home to the ASEAN Centre for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases (ACPHEED). It will serve as the centre of excellence and regional hub to strengthen ASEAN regional capabilities to prepare, prevent, detect, and respond to emerging health emergencies. We all have fumbled in so many ways in our response to COVID-19. We have learned from these experiences, and we must not allow a repeat.

Excellencies,

11. The Group of Friends of UHC will work with partners to create a platform for **thematic discussions** in preparation for the High-level Meeting on UHC in 2023, We reiterate Thailand's readiness to support the UHC process in every way we can with all the mechanisms and tools we have, so together we shall do our part in strengthening world health system and thereby sustaining the SDGs.

12. I thank you.
