

Statement to the 69th World Health Assembly on
Agenda item 13.2 Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to address the distinguished members of the WHA on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement. We commend the UN on the formulation of the new global Sustainable Development Goals. They provide a comprehensive and potentially transformative vision of the future. However, we must be visionary and recognise that strong action must be taken in order to realise the promise of these goals. Several aspects of this (action plan) are cause for concern.

Concerning Goal 12 on changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, we encourage member states to ensure the Agenda selects drivers to make Governments, international organizations, the business sector and other non-state actors and individuals contribute to changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

Of particular concern is goal 8 proposing a 7% annual economic growth of the Least Developed Countries and Goal 17, target 17.10-17.12 on free trade to fund the necessary transformation. These suggest that the same globally driven economic policies that have brought the world to the brink of an ecological disaster and have engendered multiple economic collapses are seen as the answer to sustenance of social development. The underlying assumption that nations are at the same level of development and thereby would benefit equally from free trade regimes ignores the dissimilar intensities of economic growth and ecological sustainability.

The strategies addressing issues of unfair trade; unstable finances; global tax regimes; IP laws; and investment regimes need to be credible. In order for SDGs to work for the Least Developed Countries; “debt relief rather than debt financing needs to be a key strategy.

We urge member states to craft a more coherent strategy for addressing concerns of equity that are not premised on even larger levels of economic liberalization and free trade.

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