



Plenary Session: Primary Health Care as a Key Driver to achieve UHC

Statement Delivered by Ken Bluestone, Director, CommonAge
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CommonAge is an accredited association that seeks to strengthen the rights and improve the wellbeing of older people across the Commonwealth. CommonAge commends Commonwealth Health Ministers for recognising the need for “encouraging leadership and action on health system strengthening and addressing public health challenges to secure a safe and sustainable future for all Commonwealth citizens throughout the life cycle.”

We urge the Commonwealth to recognise explicitly the health needs and rights of older people as an integral part of promoting more effective primary health care and universal health coverage.

The Commonwealth Women’s Forum at CHOGM in 2022 clearly stated in its outcomes that “Dignity and respect for older people should not only be promoted but ensured through the provision of quality healthcare and palliative care for older people and support to carers of the aged.”

This was further reinforced by the Commonwealth Foundation’s key asks to this Ministerial Meeting which recognised that older people face discrimination in accessing healthcare and that “Commonwealth governments should—in policy and in practice—explicitly recognise the health needs and rights of people of all ages. And that older people should benefit from policies and strategies that emphasise, fund and create structures to: (i) support healthy ageing; and (ii) prioritise appropriate care for older people including primary healthcare, community-based care, long-term care and support, and palliative care.”

Universal health coverage is not universal if it does not address the health needs and rights of people of all ages. Supporting primary health care that recognises and understands the health needs of older people benefits everyone in the community. We believe there are tremendous opportunities for learning across the Commonwealth on how best to address the health and care needs of older persons. We request that there be a specific discussion of this among Commonwealth Health Ministers and that this be put onto the agenda of the next Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting.