

Health Heroes + Social Good Summit
Thursday, 5 April 2018

Distinguished guests, colleagues, friends,

Thank you for the invitation to address you, and I apologise that I cannot be with you in person to discuss these very important issues, and to celebrate the everyday heroes of our health systems.

I have said many times that the staff are WHO's greatest asset. Likewise, health workers are the lifeblood of every health system. There is no health without health workers.

Without urgent action, the world faces a projected shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030.

This will jeopardise progress towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals, but more importantly, it will jeopardise the health of people, particularly those who are already vulnerable.

We cannot let this happen.

If we are to accelerate progress towards health for all, we must ensure that all people have equitable access to health workers.

We must expand and transform the global health workforce

It will take political and financial commitment.

Almost half of the resources needed for achieving the health targets in the Sustainable Development Goals are related to the education and employment of health workers.

This is not a cost to be contained; it's an investment to be nurtured.

The fact is, investing in health workers creates jobs, drives inclusive economic growth and increases productivity by getting sick people out of care and back to work.

And because seven out of 10 health workers globally are female, jobs for health workers are jobs for women.

In May 2017, the World Health Assembly adopted a five-year plan called *Working for Health* to expand and transform the health and social workforce.

WHO is working with our partners at the International Labour Organisation and the OECD to take this important work forwards.

I congratulate you all for your leadership and investments in the health and social workforce.

I look forward to working together to ensure that health workers are educated, employed, enabled and engaged in our shared ambition of health for all.

Thank you for your commitment, and I wish you every success.