

GLOBAL PRESS RELEASE

## World health leaders adopt two new ambitious global eye health targets for 2030

GENEVA Ministers of Health agreed to adopt two new ambitious eye health targets for 2030 at the 74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly, the World Health Organization's highest decision-making body. The targets address the two leading causes of blindness and vision impairment, cataract and refractive error.

To address the huge unmet need in eye care, all countries have committed to:

- 40% increase in effective coverage of refractive error by 2030
- 30% increase in effective coverage of cataract surgery by 2030

The targets cement the World Health Organization's (WHO) global strategy on vision set out in its 'World report on vision' and the World Health Assembly resolution on eye health adopted last year.

Welcoming the targets, Peter Holland, Chief Executive of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB) said "This is a significant milestone for eye health. Over 1.1 billion people are needlessly living with poor vision because they do not have access to basic eye care services like a pair of glasses or a cataract surgery. Without action, this number will rise to 1.8 billion and half the population will have myopia by 2050. The adoption, and achievement of the targets, will help ensure this does not happen".

He added "the targets are ambitious but achievable with national commitment and strong collective action. What is critical now is for countries to implement the World Report on Vision and report their progress to the WHO".

During the World Health Assembly, many countries took the opportunity to voice their support for the eye care targets and commend the World Health Organization for their ongoing work on blindness and vision impairment.

Director of Non-Communicable Diseases WHO, Dr Bente Mikkelsen said "it's a fundamental priority that integrated people-centred eye care is part of Universal Health Coverage and health systems". She reiterated the WHO's commitment to eye care noting "we want to step-up the country impact and in particular through the development of technical tools, and the resources to support countries build capacity, and to strengthen eye care within their health systems".

Alarcos Cieza, Unit Head for Vision, Disability and Rehabilitation at the WHO explained that the targets were a starting point with the "potential to drive further action". She added "We know very well that what gets measured gets done".

IAPB, Sightsavers, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Light for the World and CBM, together with the Governments of Australia and Indonesia, hosted a high-level side event at the World Health Assembly.

Over 250 health ministers and government officials, WHO representatives, civil society, academic, private sector organisations and eye health experts attended the event.

The adoption of the two targets comes as world leaders negotiate a landmark resolution on eye health at the United Nations which links eye health directly to many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**\*\*\*Ends\*\*\***

**Notes to Editors:**

- The global targets for Integrated People-Centred Eye Care, including preventable vision impairment and blindness for 2030 were adopted at 74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May.
- The World Health Assembly Side Event: Universal Health Coverage and Eye Care: new targets for a new decade was held on Tuesday 25 May 2021.
- The event was hosted by the Government of Indonesia, IAPB, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Sightsavers, CBM, Light for the World and supported by The Government of Australia.
- Speakers at the event were:
  - H.E. Budi G. Sadikin, Minister of Health for Indonesia
  - H.E. Ms Sally Mansfield, Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Conference on Disarmament in Geneva
  - Dr Bente Mikkelsen, Director of Non-Communicable Diseases, World Health Organization
  - Alarcos Cieza, Unit Head for Vision, Disability and Rehabilitation, World Health Organization
  - Dr Stuart Keel, Technical Officer, Vision and Eye Care programme, World Health Organization
  - Jennifer Gersbeck, Executive Director for The Fred Hollows Foundation
  - Peter Holland, IAPB CEO and Chair of Vision for the Commonwealth
  - Dr Phuc Huynh Tan, Director of Programs Implementation – Asia, The Fred Hollows Foundation
  - Munazza Gillani, Country Director, Sightsavers Pakistan Office

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