January 18, 2018

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
CH-1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

RE: Prioritization of Surgical and Anaesthesia Care as Part of WHO Programme of Work 2019-2023

Dear Dr. Tedros,

As a recognized champion for the role of surgical and anaesthesia care as part of universal health coverage (UHC), we wanted to thank you for your recent letter of support dated 8 December, 2017. This letter was presented during an official session at the UHC Forum 2017 in Tokyo, Japan. We commend you for leadership at this global forum and your commitment to making UHC a top priority for the WHO.

In light of the upcoming 142nd Session of the WHO Executive Board and the review of the Draft Thirteenth General Programme of Work (13GPW), we wanted to re-affirm our support for the prioritization of surgical and anaesthesia care as part of this guiding document, which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and sets an ambitious yet important triple billion goal in three priority areas: UHC, health emergencies and healthier populations.

Furthermore, we welcome the strategic shifts outlined in the GPW, including outcome-focused, fit-for-purpose, and country-centred programming. We also laud the prioritization of multisectoral collaboration, health equity, human rights and gender equality, both within the organization and across WHO programming, as these are all critical aspects of access to safe, timely and affordable surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia care.

We were particularly pleased to see the recent inclusion of safe and effective surgery as an integral component of primary health care under the Strategic Priorities outlined in the revised draft 13GPW. Ensuring that people in need have access to a basic package of safe and affordable surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia care is fundamental to UHC and essential to fully support the SDGs.

Without prioritization of surgical and anaesthesia care, as many as 17 million people will continue to face preventable death each year, with millions more suffering from lifelong disability, social exclusion, and economic hardship. Not only is safe surgical care an important component of surgical systems strengthening and UHC, but it is also cuts across a number of other aspects of sustainable development including poverty.
alleviation, health for all, education, sustainable economic growth, infrastructure, greater equality, environment, the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies and sustainable development overall. These are only possible through inclusion of SDG 17 to implement and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

To recognize the full-spectrum of surgical, obstetric, anaesthesia and trauma services required to support universal health coverage, particularly at the district hospital level where the need is often greatest, we encourage the WHO Executive Board to consider expanding the description of surgery to explicitly include “safe and effective surgical, obstetric, trauma and anaesthesia care” as part of paragraph 36 under the description of primary health care.

We appreciate the specific emphasis on quality data and health outcomes monitoring in the GPW, and we urge WHO to prioritize the collection of surgical indicators as outlined in 2015 revision of the WHO Global Reference List of 100 Core Health Indicators.

We thank you for your support and leadership as a champion of safe global surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia care as part of UHC. On behalf of the G4 Alliance and our 85+ global member organizations, we would also like to congratulate you on the development of a robust 13GPW that prioritizes “healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.”

Respectfully,


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