PRESS RELEASE

Global Digital Health Initiative 2030 launched in R&D drive to anchor Universal Health Coverage and Global Goals in Digital Economy & Society

<u>Berlin - October 16, 2018</u>

A breakthrough collaboration in global health research & development was today unveiled at the *World Health Summit 2018* in Berlin. The *Global Digital Health Initiative (GDHI) 2030* is being launched by leading think tanks from the Commonwealth of Nations and United Nations to create a uniquely neutral hub and evidence platform for unleashing the benefits of the digital healthcare revolution.[1]

With less than a year before the first *UN High-level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) 2030* at the UN General Assembly in 2019, the absence of digital health as a core component for scaling up UHC across the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the need to anchor both UHC 2030 and the SDGs in the new reality of the 21st Century digital economy and society, is a policy priority for the global health community.

In contrast to key sectors like banking, media, mobile and retail where digital ubiquity is the new normal this is far from case in global health today. While the private sector is now beginning to address UHC 2030 and the Global Goals as vibrant and viable markets, the health and technology industries continue to diverge in vital aspects of economic, cultural and social integration.

"The road to UHC 2030 will involve a critical balance in embracing digital innovation and investment in the new health economy while promoting equity of access and affordability", said Dr. Ilona Kickbusch, Director, *Global Health Centre at The Graduate Institute Geneva*, Co-Chair, *UHC 2030 Steering Committee* and *GDHI 2030* Co-Chair. *"*All at a time when international flows of people, goods and capital are transforming economies industries*.*

In fact, with the landmark World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution on "Digital Health" agreed by all 193 World Health Organization (WHO) member states in May 2018, and the call for the WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus , to deliver a "Global Strategy on Digital Health" to the WHA by May 2020, the stakes for advancing a truly global market in UHC and the health-related SDGs by 2030 have taken on a new dimension.

"The future of health care is digital," said Dr Tedros. "Mobile phones and improved Internet coverage mean we can get health services and health information to people and places we've never reached before. We must be aggressive and proactive in harnessing the power of digital technologies for universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals."

Digital health matters because it may be the best and possibly only way to meaningfully address a growing, ageing global population that is having a profound impact on health spending across the world, predicted to rise to $9.3 trillion in 2018 alone. With average health care costs in OECD countries some 9.9% of GDP and as low as 2-3% in the poorest countries, estimates of system-wide wastage are as high as 40% of total expenditure in many cases.

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[1] *GDHI 2030* is being jointly established by the Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health (CWCDH) (**https://cwcdh.org/**), Global Health Centre at The Graduate Institute Geneva (**http://graduateinstitute.ch/globalhealth**), Global He@lth 2030 Innovation Taskforce (**http://www.globalhealth2030.org/**), and International Institute for Global Health (IIGH) at the United Nations University (UNU) (**https://iigh.unu.edu/**).

"Digital technologies can equalize access to care through innovations that deliver health outside traditional health services", said Dr. Pascale Allotey, Director, *International Institute for Global Health (IIGH) at the United Nations University (UNU)*, and *GDHI 2030* Co-Chair. "But they can also exacerbate inequalities if gender and other social determinants of health are not core to their development and deployment in health systems strengthening."

As new technological developments aim to personalize precision medicine in order to tailor prevention and treatment to individual patients based on their genetic makeup, the boundaries between the physical, biological and digital worlds are blurring. In this complex environment, the next step is ensuring global cooperation and collaboration for the sustainability of innovations, their feasibility, scale-up and inclusivity.

The *GDHI 2030* will work with multi-sector and inter-disciplinary development partners to identify priority areas on digital health that are beneficial to address in the new health economy including gaps in evidence-based policy and research, cost-effectiveness and sustainability, support and scale-up, financing and business models, data privacy security, and ethical and legal issues.

Supporting Commonwealth and UN member states and specialized agencies as a designated think tank in global digital health, the *GDHI 2030* envisions a new deal for UHC and SDG R&D that translates evidence into policy and innovation into impact through guidance that is contextually relevant for country-level decision makers. This will require the creation of a digital health development dynamic in current national health strategies and systems.

"The digital opportunity is to strengthen UHC and the SDGs by improved access to, and monitoring, sharing and use of, quality data, direct citizen, health worker and government engagement, and to build capacity for rapid response to disease incidents and public health emergencies", said H.E. Mr. Shri J. P. Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

While UHC is firmly rooted in the WHO constitution of 1948 declaring health a fundamental human right and on the Health for All agenda set by the Alma Ata declaration in 1978, and cuts across all of the health-related SDGs, it is widely recognized that the narrow definition of UHC as basically a financial issue that enhances equity of access and affordability as well quality of health service must be expanded in the digital era.[2]

"Increasingly, the solution to today's global health crises lies in a radical inversion of traditional medical orthodoxy that favored treatment over prevention, and top-down and hierarchical health topologies over bottom-up, decentralized, and people-centric architectures for the democratization of health and development", said Denis Gilhooly, Chief Strategy Officer at the *Commonwealth Centre for Digital Health* and *GDHI 2030* Co-Chair.

What is clear is that with the digital healthcare revolution still in its infancy a unique policy and technology window has opened to build in international standards and safeguards at the earliest stage of evolution.

In addition, with the digital health space notionally encompassing everything from electronic health and mobile health to block-chain and artificial intelligence (AI), the digital opportunity for catalytic and collaborative R&D in addressing early warning pandemic and natural disaster response, Anti-microbial Resistance (AMR), chronic non-communicable disease (NCD), and the diseases of climate change and migration is immense.

"Africa is harnessing the power of the digital healthcare revolution and finding new ways to tackle challenging health problems, " said Dr.Matshidiso Moeti, WHO's Regional Director for Africa. "Digital innovations will not only

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[2] See - **http://www.who.int/health_financing/universal_health_definition/en/ -** " "

help ensure universal health coverage and better health for all and could be instrumental in addressing future-orientated issues such as the huge population and demographic shifts on the African continent ."

Digital health will also be a major market opportunity. The *Business & Sustainable Development Commission* predicts the opening up of an estimated $12 trillion of SDG market opportunities by 2030 in just the four economic systems of food & agriculture, cities, energy & materials, and health and well-being. With the strategic use of technology and innovation, and full engagement of the private sector, all 17 global goals just may be achievable.

In the context of transformational change, attention will be keenly focused on next the G20 Summit and Ministerial Meetings under the presidency of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abein in Osaka, June 28-30, 2019. In 2017, the German presidency of Chancellor Angel Merkel broke new ground as the first G20 member to elevate global health to the status of a dedicate thematic track. Japan is currently considering going an important step further by merging the health, finance and digital economy and society tracks, as consistent with its own holistic vision for the "Japan 5.0 Society".[3]

"We are thrilled that this important initiative is being launched at the World Health Summit 2018! Digital Health plays an increasingly important role as we strive to ensure health for everyone on the planet", said Prof. Detlev Ganten, Founding President of the *World Health Summit*. "Not using available data to the benefit of the patient and to improve health would be unethical! For this we have to work on international ethical standards. We at the *World Health Summit* look forward to partner with the *Global Digital Health Initiative 2030* and collaborate in the future to move this agenda forward."

Meanwhile, new thinking is also anticipated from the UN Secretary General's *High Level Panel (HLP) on "Digital Cooperation*, co-chaired by Melinda Gates and Jack Ma, and due to report also in June 2019. "Digital technology can transform personal and global health care" said Dr. Vinton G. Cerf, Internet Pioneer and Vice President & Chief Internet Evangelist at Google and Member of the HLP. "Aggregation and analysis of digital health information will yield new insights into cures and better detection of incipient pandemics. Continuous monitoring will enable early detection. The time to act is NOW!"[4]

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[3] See - **https://www.japan.go.jp/g20japan/**
[4] See - **https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/personnel-appointments/2018-07-12/secretary-generals-high-level-panel-digital-cooperation**