



Statement by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)

69th World Health Assembly: Agenda Item 16.4 addressing the global shortages of medicines, and the safety and accessibility of children's medication

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), representing over 900 cancer organisations across 155 countries.

Shortages of medicines for adults and children are a significant public health challenge with grave consequences for health. We therefore welcome Member States' report and draft resolutions. In the case of cancer, we also welcome the 2015 update of the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines which now numbers 46 cancer medicines in total and covers therapy for approximately 70% of childhood cancers. Shortages of these essential medicines contribute to the global divide in survival rates, with children with curable cancers dying unnecessarily in many parts of the world.

While only a first step in ensuring the availability, affordability, quality assurance and rational use of children's medicines, the Model List is an important tool which needs to be maintained regularly to remain relevant and provide a robust guide to the selection of priority medicines, particularly in low income settings.

The quality and safe use of medicines must be given careful attention, particularly appropriate dosage forms for children and adolescents. We welcome the focus on strengthening regulatory infrastructure to tackle weak distribution chains, lack of diligence on storage requirements and counterfeit medicines which can result in the poor quality medicines that are at best less effective and at worst, harmful and potentially lethal. We also encourage efforts to stabilize demand and identify incentives for manufacturers to enter the often niche markets for children's indications.

It is critical to recognise that medicines alone cannot guarantee safe use or the impact they promise. UICC therefore strongly supports the focus on health systems articulated in both draft resolutions and encourages Members States and the WHO Secretariat to continue to drive forward efforts in this area.

Thank you.