

## ***Session 2: International dimensions of universal health coverage (UHC) – obligation or charity?***

Speaker of the second session was K. Srinath Reddy, professor and president of the Public Health Foundation of India. He started by elaborating what is global about the concept of universal health coverage (UHC). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shared vulnerability to infectious diseases provides an impetus to global health regulations. Similarly, nowadays, common threats such as antimicrobial resistance call for international cooperation and collaboration. And from a moral perspective, shared values, among them especially social solidarity, are hallmarks of an advancement in civilisation and in UHC.

In order to establish an effective UHC system, according to professor Reddy several points have to be approached both on a national and an international level: Adequate human resources, facilities with drugs and equipment, and financial funds. However, there are various challenges in these points. High-income countries are draining health workers from lower- and middle-income countries and indirectly contributing to a lack of access to health services in these countries. Also, access to drugs is not universal, calling for strong international cooperation.

Prof. Reddy brought forward some recommendations to improve and advance international cooperation in UHC. For example, legal landscapes such as free trade agreements, which should be seen as tools to improve access to drugs, investment in drugs for neglected tropical diseases, which should be increased and stakeholders, who should hold each other accountable.

Prof. Reddy concluded that UHC is a unifying platform that makes global cooperation possible and necessary. With this platform, goals such as equal access to drugs could be tackled. International cooperation regarding the implementation of UHC is therefore not charity, but an obligation!

The first respondent, Prof. Albrecht Jahn from the Institute of Public Health in Heidelberg, asked how one could justify international financing of UHC and presented four dimensions:

- Public health dimension: Diseases spread across borders and hence prevention needs an international approach.
- Ethical dimension: Solidarity and fairness when it comes to the spread of diseases.
- Economical dimension: Health is wealth, less expenditures.
- Political dimension: Self-interest in health.

Stephanie Dagon, Professor at the Global Studies Institute at the University of Geneva, panellist from the discipline of Law, spoke about the elements of a social security system: Having a common objective, equity and mutuality of obligation. Achim Lang, from Zürich University of Applied Sciences, panellist from the discipline of Political Science, concluded the session by emphasizing that strategic objectives inspire to act on an international level.