

79th World Health Assembly

Constituency Statement:

12.5 Primary healthcare

The statement is delivered by International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness on behalf of

1. The Fred Hollows Foundation
2. Sightsavers/The Royal Commonwealth Society of the Blind
3. The World Council of Optometry
4. CBM Christian Blind Mission
5. Organisation pour la prévention de la cécité (OPC)
6. World Blind Union

Honorable chair and distinguished delegates,

We commend Member States and WHO for their continued commitment to Primary Health Care, while recognizing the persistent underfunding and underinvestment in PHC globally.

Today, over 2.2 billion people live with vision impairment or blindness, including at least 1 billion cases that are preventable or unaddressed. Yet eye care remains under-integrated within PHC despite many eye conditions being manageable at primary care level with adequate resourcing, trained personnel, referral pathways, and essential services.

Uncorrected refractive error remains a leading cause of vision impairment globally, although a simple pair of spectacles can restore vision, and improve education, employment, productivity, independence, and quality of life.

The economic case on eye health, Value of Vision demonstrates that every US\$1 invested in eye health in LMICs can generate approximately US\$28 in economic returns through improved health, education, productivity, and participation.

Integrating inclusive, people-centred eye care into PHC is therefore essential for advancing Universal Health Coverage, health equity, and social and economic development.

We welcome the inclusion of eye health within the 2019 and 2023 Political Declarations on UHC and urge Member States to explicitly strengthen commitments on eye health, including its integration within PHC approaches, in the 2027 Political Declaration, consistent with the WHA 73.4 on Integrated people-centred eye care.

We also encourage governments to advance commitments at the Global Summit for Eye Health in Antigua and Barbuda in November.

