In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the new development agenda: Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Comprising 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Agenda integrates all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) around the themes of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The SDGs recognize that eradicating poverty and inequality, creating inclusive economic growth and preserving the planet are inextricably linked, not only to each other, but also to population health.

Intended to realize the vision of a world that is rights based, equitable and inclusive, the 2030 Agenda is to be implemented in a manner consistent with the existing obligations of states under international law. Many governments, institutions and organizations have already started to translate the new agenda into their development plans, strategies and visions. Encouraging stakeholders to work together to promote sustained, inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection, the 2030 Agenda is designed to benefit all. Universal in scope, the agenda will require a comprehensive, integrated approach to sustainable development, as well as collective action at all levels. “Leaving no one behind” will be an overarching theme, and addressing inequalities and discrimination a defining feature.

Health is centrally positioned within the 2030 Agenda, with one comprehensive goal – SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages – and explicit links to many of the other goals. The 2030 Agenda thus has major implications for the health sector, and its realization will entail the development of coherent, integrated approaches, and an emphasis on equity and multisectoral action. Each of these broad objectives will require debate and the generation of new approaches at global, regional and country levels.

SDG 3 includes 13 targets covering all major health priorities, including four targets on the unfinished and expanded Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agenda, four targets to address noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), mental health, injuries and environmental issues, and four “means-of-implementation” targets. The target for universal health


coverage (UHC) underpins, and is key to, the achievement of all the other targets and the development of strong resilient health systems. Achieving the UHC target will require an integrated approach to the provision of health services that minimizes fragmentation and the competing agendas that characterized the MDG period. Comprehensive in scope, the health targets build upon a wide array of recent World Health Assembly (WHA) and Regional Committee resolutions, WHO and other global plans of action and current country health strategies.1

Tracking progress was vital in maintaining momentum towards the MDGs and in identifying areas that required greater efforts. It will be no less important in the context of the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda places considerable emphasis on the systematic follow-up and review of SDG-related implementation at country, regional and global levels. Health-related monitoring will occur in the context of overall assessment of progress towards the SDGs, and will need to be comprehensive, comprising the monitoring of: (a) overall progress towards SDG 3; (b) the UHC target; (c) other health targets; and (d) health-related targets in other goals – all of which will be undertaken with a strong emphasis on equity.

In March 2016, the United Nations Statistical Commission discussed the proposed global indicator framework of its Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs).2 IAEG-SDGs members represent 28 national statistical offices, with United Nations agencies acting as observers and the United Nations Statistical Division as the secretariat. The United Nations Statistical Commission agreed “as a practical starting point” with the global indicator framework proposed by the IAEG-SDGs “subject to further technical refinement”.3

The indicator framework will be presented for adoption to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) for Sustainable Development, under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council in mid-2016.2 The indicator framework comprises 230 indicators, including several dozen requiring further development. The framework is focused on indicators for the 169 SDG targets, and does not include goal-level or thematic indicators that cut across goals - all of which will be undertaken with a strong emphasis on equity.

A complex and intensive reporting, follow-up and review process is planned, and will include an annual SDG Progress Report by the United Nations Secretary-General with support from the United Nations system. The report will serve to inform the HLPF, which will also receive a Global Sustainable Development Report from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Follow-up and review will possibly focus on a small number of themes each year with the intention of covering all SDGs over a period of 4 years. Every 4 years, starting in 2019 and under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly, the HLPF will review overall progress and provide high-level political guidance on the SDG agenda and its implementation.4 Review mechanisms will also be established at regional and national level, and are likely to be more active and relevant than was the case for the MDGs.

This World Health Statistics report represents an initial effort to bring together available data on the SDG health and health-related indicators to provide an assessment of the situation in 2016 and to take stock of data gaps. Data are presented on the proposed indicators for health targets in goal 3 and selected health-related targets in other SDG targets, revealing the crucial linkages between health and the other SDGs. The two-page summaries in Annex A provide more detailed information on the epidemiological situation, set out what is needed to achieve the 2030 targets, and indicate what is currently known about the key aspects of equity and the extent of data gaps for each target.

In addition, this report presents summary measures of health such as life expectancy to assess the situation and trends which can be used to monitor health goal-level progress. UHC is one of the health targets. As stated above, because it underpins the achievement of all other health targets under SDG 3, a separate section presents statistics on a UHC service-coverage index and on measures of financial protection using the WHO/World Bank UHC monitoring framework.5 Finally, as equity is central to the realization of the SDGs, special attention is given to describing the statistical situation disaggregated by key demographic, geographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

The report does not address issues related to monitoring the global partnership that will be crucial in advancing the 2030 Agenda. Future monitoring will have to include the extent to which a revitalized global partnership is delivering the means of implementation. SDG 17 is specifically devoted to strengthening the means of implementation and a set of indicators has been drawn up to monitor progress in achieving that end. This also includes monitoring the extent to which data are disaggregated by relevant inequality dimensions and the extent to which countries are making progress in implementing a regular census and succeed in achieving high levels of birth and death registration.