My sister Michelle Bachelet, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It’s a privilege to be here today.

You don’t need me to remind you of the terrible toll taken by cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer affects over half a million women each year, and kills a quarter of a million. One woman dies of cervical cancer every two minutes, making it one of the greatest threats to women’s health.

Each one is a tragedy, and we can prevent it.

Most of these women are not diagnosed early enough, and lack access to life-saving treatment.

If we don’t act, deaths from cervical cancer will rise by almost 50% by 2030.

Cervical cancer strikes women in the prime of life. These women are raising children, caring for their families and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities.

Nine in 10 women who die from cervical cancer are in poor countries. This means some of the most vulnerable women in our world are dying unnecessarily. That cannot be fair or just.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable forms of cancer, as long as it is detected early and managed effectively.

Prevention and early treatment are also highly cost-effective.

HPV vaccines are truly wonderful inventions.

The fact that the research that led to the development of vaccines against HPV won a Nobel Prize speaks for itself.

If only we had vaccines against every form of cancer.
Our challenge is to ensure that all girls globally are vaccinated against HPV and that every woman over 30 is screened and treated for pre-cancerous lesions. To achieve that, we need innovative technologies and strategies.

We must improve access to diagnosis and treatment of invasive cancers at their earliest stages, and ensure the availability of palliative care for women who need it.

All of these services must be embedded in strong health systems aimed at delivering universal health coverage.

High-income countries have shown the way. In many of these countries, cervical cancer is becoming a thing of the past. Now is the time for global elimination.

During my campaign in 2016, I made a commitment to support the global elimination of cervical cancer. I reiterated that commitment when I was elected as Director-General a year ago.

We have the tools to turn that commitment into a reality. But crucially, we also have the political commitment.

Several countries and UN agencies have already joined forces under the UN Global Joint Programme on Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control.

But to succeed, we need everyone on board. We must expand our partnership to include anyone and everyone who can help us reach our goal.

That’s why today I am calling for coordinated action globally to eliminate cervical cancer.

I’m encouraged that today we’re joined by GAVI, the Global Fund, UNITAID, UICC and the World Bank.

As the manufacturers of live-saving vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, the private sector is also a key partner in this mission.

We cannot succeed without all of you.

Thank you for your everything you have already done. We still have a lot of hard work ahead of us. Please join us in making cervical cancer history.

Thank you.