

TEXT OF SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE DELEGATION OF TURKEY

(Dr Muezzinoglu) Fourth plenary meeting, 21 May 2013

Agenda item 3: Address by the Director-General

Dr Muezzinoglu (Turkey):

Distinguished President, Excellencies, Ministers, Delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

I'd like to first of all extend the condolences of the Turkish people to the United States of America for the tragic tornado in east Oklahoma.

I am happy because we have reached, to a large extent, the Millennium Development Goals as developed by the United Nations in 2000. Indeed, much has been done: important progress has been made on Millennium Development Goal indicators such as alleviation of extreme poverty, access to improved sources of water including communicable and noncommunicable diseases, but challenges remain such as access to improved drinking water and sanitation, reduction in maternal mortality and child mortality. We still lose lives due to preventable conditions and causes, such as shortage of vaccinations, curable pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria. Although polio is a different area globally, joint efforts are made to overcome it. We still have not finished our job. Turkey is ready to provide any support for the global eradication of polio and we support the Polio Eradication Endgame Strategic Plan 2013–2018 to end polio disease in advance.

Still, we have some way to go. Health should take its proper position in the post-2015 development agenda, observing the constantly changing needs of the developing world and taking into consideration lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals. Health and education should be made an integral part of the development agenda.

The rising trend of communicable diseases and the increase in noncommunicable diseases – substance abuse, alcohol and tobacco use and resulting problems – increase not only the health care needs of people but also the burden on health care systems. Therefore, as governments, we have to develop and implement policies to provide people with health care that protects from financial risks, and that is accessible and equitable. Frankly, it is only possible to do this through universal health care coverage that includes preventive, rehabilitative and treatment services as well as financial protection.

We, as the international health community, need to act in concert to prevent the people from falling into financial ruin and falling below the poverty line due to health expenses. We need to remember that the true victims of poor health systems are the poor and destitute who do not have proper access to health care.

Our goal as governments has to be the elimination of such inequities and ensure proper delivery of health care, particularly to the vulnerable groups, with a view to fulfilling social accessibility. When we build our health systems, we need to pay special attention to strengthening maternal and child health.

Over the past 10 years, Turkey has tried to put this into practice in its true sense. We have removed the barriers to accessing health care. We have reached a universal health coverage rate of about 98% in Turkey, protecting all our citizens from the above-mentioned financial risks. Not only do we provide our citizens with a comprehensive benefit package we also protect the asylum-seeking Syrian guests, escaping from events in that country.

Distinguished delegates, natural disasters aside, we must prevent people from suffering lack of access to health care and humanitarian aid, as a basic human right. We should never give up this goal of delivery of health care. We are all aware of the services provided by Turkey both inside and outside

this boundary, but Turkey cannot maintain these services on its own. At this point, Turkey reiterates the call it has been making loudly for years, and calls on the United Nations, particularly WHO and international actors, to take on more responsibility rather than watching from a distance. Thank you.

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